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# THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

*By*  
STEPHEN GWYNN



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To Mr. and Mrs. F. S. Oliver, of Edgerston.

Dear F. and K.

I must not try to fix you with responsibility for this temerarious intrusion where Scots have prior claim. Still, you aided and abetted. When I decided to write about Sir Walter, I knew only his books; your hospitality and your guidance gave me some acquaintance with his countryside. It would have been hard not to gather something from staying in that house where he in his day was often a visitor, and even mixing with your people whose forbears were his people. Indeed, more than all, you yourselves, both of you, when I saw you in your native setting, helped me to realise the type of society in which his character and his genius were moulded.

If I did not hope that this book might justify itself, I should not offer it to you. The best chance of being readable is to write of what we enjoy and admire: and I am not prepared to admit that anyone, not even either of you, has had more pleasure than I from the *Waverley Novels*. Delight in them, which began before my schooldays, has increased continually as usage of life and of books extended; and as for admiration, since I first read Sir Walter's *Journal* I have known that the man was greater and more lovable than even the best of his work.

So, humbly, but in true allegiance, I beg for this book a place somewhere in sight of the shelves where the collected edition of the *Waverleys* and Lockhart's *Memoir* hold their place in rank, volume by volume, as they appeared a hundred years ago, in the room where Sir Walter used to confer with Edgerston of those days concerning such matters as old monuments of the *Rutherfords* at *Jedburgh*.

*If he could only walk in, one of these days ! Would the tree-planter monopolise him ? or would the landscape gardener, if her first string failed, seduce him with talk of newly discovered Roman roads, or old knickknacks dug out of some barrow ? Lord, what fun it would be ! and not really like meeting a ghost. For in his own country Sir Walter scarcely seems dead—and least of all at Edgerston.*

*Even in these pages something of that great and genial presence may, I hope, be felt ; and so, with old affection and gratitude, they are inscribed to you.*

S. G.

JUNE, 1929.

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SIR WALTER SCOTT : \* : : : : *Frontispiece*

"This picture is after the painting made in 1824 for George Tickner, an American admirer, by C. R. Leslie, R.A., then a young artist, whom Sir Walter chose to make the portrait—which in 1871 was still in the possession of Mr. Tickner's family. Hodgett must have made his drawing before the picture went to America, where another engraving was made from it by a different hand. Examples of the print here reproduced by permission of its owner, Mr. F. S. Oliver, are very rare."

WALTER SCOTT IN HIS STUDY, FROM A PAINTING

BY SIR WILLIAM ALLAN : : : *facing p. 250*



# THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

SOME excuse is surely needed for setting out to do once again what has already been done excellently. • By general consent Lockhart's (*Life of Sir Walter Scott* ranks with the half-dozen best biographies in the English language;) and none assents more heartily to that judgment than the writer who now attempts to make a new study of the same subject, and who must be beholden for his materials to Lockhart more than to any other authority—with one exception. Sir Walter himself is our chief source for our knowledge of Sir Walter. There is no other man in all the great army of the dead about whom we can know so much and so surely; there is none who gives us so freely and so completely his companionship. We have his innumerable letters; we have the immense range of his works into which, in one way or other, he put all his preoccupations—his imaginings, his aspirations, his enjoyments, his hobbies (a great stud of these), his knowledge, and, not least, his very solid thinking. For the years of his childhood and youth up to his call to the Bar, we have the fragment of autobiography written when he was thirty-seven, and at the height of his fame in poetry. But above all and more than all, we have the journal of his last six years when, under the artist's compulsion to self-expression, he recorded from day to day the movements of his strong nature in the stress of great trouble and in the moments of relief from it.



Lockhart had all this before him and used it all; over and above this, he had his intimacy of many years with the great man of whose family circle he became part when he married Scott's daughter. Yet, Lockhart's biography was planned on a scale which renders it inaccessible to all but patient readers, so that a new hand may be justified in undertaking a work of wholly different scope.

But when all is said, we come back to Cuddie Headrigg's saying in *Old Mortality*, "A gude tale's no the waur of being twice told, I trow, and a body has the better chance to understand it." The world's great stories are the free commonage of writers, big or little, and the story of Walter Scott ranks among them; nor in all the tales of great men's lives is there one better worth understanding.

The first thing to realise about Sir Walter Scott is that although he grew up with all the ambition natural to a healthy young man of strong abilities, and though he loved letters and the art of composition as much as any that ever lived, he would never have been a professional writer except for bodily disablement. Nothing else could have kept back this born soldier. Speaking of his eldest son's desire to enter the army, he says to Southey, "I have no title to combat a choice which would have been my own had lameness permitted." The call of the blood in him would have been irresistible. His father was the first of the line who had ever followed an indoor occupation.

As compared with the group of his contemporaries—the most remarkable in the history of English literature since Shakespeare's time—Scott differs from them all in this. Crabbe, Campbell, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Byron, Shelley, Keats and Moore were writers by election; destiny and natural choice wrought together in them; and though Byron, in the end, was drawn to action and obeyed the summons willingly, it was not till he had exhausted the prime impulse of his nature. Scott, on the other hand, became a writer, much as in primitive peasant communities the blind man learns to be a fiddler. (He expressed himself in writing because he could not express himself in the

form of action which he would have chosen; he wrote of martial adventure because the adventure itself was denied him.

This is perhaps the true reason why he, who valued literature so highly and was even over-generous in judgment of his contemporaries, persistently under-valued his own work. We have to remember that it was never his sole work, nor, even in his own eyes, his first duty—unless at the close of his life, and then for reasons that were alien to art. He was one of the most ungrudging workers that ever lived, but in literature he was hardly a conscientious craftsman. It is no way certain that we are the losers by the slapdash methods of composition, “hab-nab at a venture,” which he always followed. But had Walter Scott commanded a regiment, that duty would certainly have been performed much more punctiliously than was the writing of his books.

Since with Scott, literature was not an inevitable vocation to which he was from the first self-dedicated—as were Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley—it is more than usually necessary to study the external circumstances which turned him to literature. Authorship was not his mission; it was the adventure which came to a born adventurer; and three great factors—time, race and locality—helped to shape the form which the adventure took.

Time means history. Walter Scott, born in 1771, was only two years younger than Napoleon, whom he survived by eleven years. The greater part of his adult life, through young manhood and middle age, was profoundly coloured by the European struggle, out of which grew—amongst other effects—an intense patriotism of Great Britain. This helped to draw together two countries which at Scott’s birth were still greatly divided in habits and feelings. More than that: the period of Napoleonic war, by increase in facility of communications, comradeship in service, and other factors, made Scotland itself more united than ever it had been before. Yet this was one more cause. What the genius of Chatham began by enlisting Highland sentiment

when he made Highland costume a British uniform, the genius of Walter Scott completed by celebrating Scottish virtues and Scottish usages till Highland and Lowland were joined in a common pride.

Walter Scott grew up in a country which within recent memory had been a land of war. When he began to write, Scotland had for the first time in its troubled history enjoyed half a century of peace.—His grandfather, at whose feet he crawled as a crippled child, was born about 1700, and had therefore experienced civil war in 1715 and again in 1745. The interval between these dates had been filled with plots and apprehensions: indeed, not till long after 1745 did the Jacobite faction wholly give up hopes and intrigues. These disturbances had been no mere passing inconveniences to the family of which Walter Scott was born. His great-grandfather, an earlier Walter Scott, second son of the laird of Raeburn (an estated gentleman in Teviotdale) worked for the Jacobite cause till (according to Scott's early fragment of autobiography) "he lost all he had in the world, and ran a narrow risk of being hanged, had it not been for the interference of Anne, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth." This veteran rebel was so far from concealing his proclivities that he left his face unclipped and unshorn in token of his mourning for the House of Stuart, and was known through the countryside as "Beardie."

Since Beardie's inheritance was dissipated through conspiracies, his second son, Robert—Walter Scott's grandfather—had his own way to make in the world, and got a lease of Sandyknowe Farm in Teviotdale, where he built up a prosperous trade in cattle. Having quarrelled with his father, he turned Whig; and as Whigs, he and his sons continued to be staunch supporters of the Hanoverians. Robert Scott's eldest son, Sir Walter's father, took to the law, became a Writer to the Signet, and married into the best professional society of Edinburgh. His wife, Miss Rutherford, was daughter to the Professor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh. Her mother, as Scott is careful to tell us, "was a daughter of Sir John Swinton of

Swinton, a family which produced many distinguished warriors during the Middle Ages, and which, for antiquity and honourable alliances, may rank with any in Britain." Thus he could say of himself with full warrant :

"My birth was neither distinguished nor sordid. According to the prejudices of the country, it was esteemed gentle, as I was connected, though remotely, with ancient families both by my father's and mother's side."

✓ Scott was, to give a new word an old meaning, class-conscious; he accepted and upheld the existence of social distinctions. But if he dwelt with satisfaction on his own lineage, there is to be remembered the saying of a working-man at Abbotsford: "Sir Walter speaks to a' body as if they were his blude relations." ✓

Yet in Scott's case, something much more powerful than ordinary family pride is to be discerned: a vanished way of life, confronts us in the words and deeds and thoughts of a modern man of letters. Nobody can begin to understand Sir Walter without knowing what the Scotts were and had been.

He was not only a Scotsman but a Borderer—and a Borderer of the borderers.—Everybody knows the sharp distinction between Highland and Lowland: ✓ Lowland, the country of towns and of tillage, farms and orderly plantation; Highland, the mountain and moor, lake and river, with a little spade-labour about the crofts, but for the most part a country that defies cultivation. A different way of life, a different race, are marked off by another speech. The Scots tongue of the Lowlands was hard for an Englishman to follow—being indeed, as Scott always held, a distinct language with its own rich vocabulary and literature—yet was in the main intelligible to an Englishman; But the Gaelic was as different from Scotch or English as Greek is from Dutch or German.

Walter Scott was not without some touch of Highland blood; his great-grandmother, wife to the Jacobite Beardie, was a lady of the Clan Campbell. ✓ From early in his youth, he knew and fell in love with Highland scenery. Lads of Highland stock became known to him, at school and at the

university, and the houses of their parents welcomed him, Also, Edinburgh was full of Highlanders in domestic service, or at labour of one kind or other, and these were always familiar to him. But all he ever knew of Gaelic was a handful of phrases caught up by the ear, so that he did not distinguish where one word began and another ended. In short, Highland life and Highland history were a province in which he must work by sympathetic imagination, for it was by nature strange to him; and in all his work he presents Gaelic Scotland as a strange country. Whether we see the Highlanders through the eyes of Bailie Nicol Jarvie in *Rob Roy*, or of Dugald Dalgetty in *The Legend of Montrose*, we see them as in some degree alien from the kindly Scots to whom Sir Walter himself belonged.

For, in relation to the Gaelic Highlands, Scott was a Lowlander; claymore and targe were no more in the tradition of his family than was the Gaelic tongue. But up to the date when Scotland ceased to be a separate kingdom, its peaceful Lowlands were hemmed in between two Highlands, both of them lands of war, where no man went unarmed. Scott's forbears had been always aliens in the mountains northward of the Firths of Forth and Clyde; but on the other mountains, which fenced off Scotland and its capital from England, his race had its home; and its men were among the fiercest of a people fierce as any Gaelic caterans, and as much outside the control of the law, whether made at Edinburgh or London.

Yet Borderers and Highlanders had little in common except that both were cattle raiders, and both accepted the clan system, under which groups using a common name rendered some kind of obedience to the head of the clan.

By race the Borderers were of one blood with the Lowland Scots—and, perhaps even more closely, with their counterparts on the English side of the border. Their speech was the Scots tongue, though without the refinements which it had received in the capital of Scotland. Gaelic was strange to them as Welsh would have been. But an even more notable difference arose from the character of the land

which they inhabited. The Border is a huddle of rounded hills rising to mountain height, but for the most part free from crag and rock, and covered instead of heath with coarse tufted grass, the "bent." All this land, therefore, was pasture, but each holder needed great extents of it for his black cattle, or for the sheep which later replaced them; yet the whole could be travelled by horses except where marsh rendered it impassable. There was no enclosure of fields; no cultivation, except just beside the widely scattered farmhouses; and consequently a farmer's life consisted in watching his cattle over wide tracts which he crossed on horseback.

Cattle in such places stray, and can be made to stray; they can be driven off wholesale; and it was each man's interest to protect not only his own gear but his neighbour's from marauders from a distance; and so the farmer needed to be an armed man. But he did not, like the Highlander, use broadsword and targe on foot; his weapon was the horseman's lance, and he rode in a rude armour—buff coat, breastplate and skull cap.

Scott, in one of his Notes to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* quotes this passage from Fuller—written so late as the seventeenth century. "They are called mosstroopers because dwelling in the mosses and riding in troops together, they dwell on the meeting or bounds of two kingdoms but obey the laws of neither."

The border between England and Scotland was no better marked than that between farm and farm; and before the union of kingdoms, whenever war arose between the countries, raids across it to capture men and cattle were much in repute. Even in times of peace, no Englishman's cattle were wholly safe against Scottish raiders, and no Scot's from the English; and it was legal for the owner and his supporters to "carry the fray" across the border and recover what was stolen.

The habit of war and plunder ceased on the Border long before it disappeared from among the Highland clans. Even up to 1745, *Waverley* shows us that cattle-lifting prevailed north of the Clyde; whereas in the *Black Dwarf*,

Borderers under the sovereignty of Queen Anne, discussing the means to right a wrong, are made to say that no man living knows the lawful method of "carrying a fray" into England. Yet Scott depicts them then as still eager to take up a neighbour's quarrel by joint action under a chosen leader. This is fiction, of course; but the whole passage is one which no one can read and not be persuaded of its essential truth. Hobbie Elliot, the wronged man, whose bride has been carried off, is as much alive as Dandie Dinmont. The words he speaks give us the accent of his voice, and almost the movement of his body; and we no more question that this is what he would have said or done than if we had seen the actions, and heard the words coming from a man's mouth. For on the Border Scott is almost more completely at home than on the streets of Edinburgh, his native town. " 1

Even to-day, the district of what was called the Middle Marches is one of the least enclosed regions in these islands. You may walk all day south from the actual border through the Waste of Cumberland and scarcely find a made road; homesteads are perhaps one in every five miles; the land is lonely as it was when Dandie Dinmont was waylaid there, at our first acquaintance with him.—Also, Scott makes it plain to us that though Dandie and his neighbours had learnt to take their disputes into a court of law, still every man in that country was ready to "gar his hand keep his head." They were still at the end of the eighteenth century a different folk from the Lowlanders; they were horsemen and fighting men; and Scott loved a horseman and a fighting man. They were hospitable as the Highlanders, and gear was more plentiful with them; they were also quarrelsome. But Scott would make us understand they did not quarrel for Highland reasons, of imaginary insult, but for some good intelligible cause, such as the right to graze a strip of moor worth at least a shilling a year.

Among them were vestiges easily to be discerned of a Homeric way of life, and fragments were still preserved of rudimentary epic—ballads telling of Border wars, border risings, border cattle-liftings and frays to recover

them, Border rescues and Border hangings: wild work in which no men had, been forwarder than Scott's own forbears.

The way into Scotland, even in Scott's lifetime, led normally through Berwick-on-Tweed. Here the Tweed forms the border for several miles. Then the dividing line turns southward through the Cheviots, along the hill-tops, following roughly the watershed between what flows north-west into the Tweed and what flows south-east into the Coquet or into the Tyne. These were the East Marches.

At the western end of the frontier, Solway Firth made a clear division, and Carlisle on the Eden, close to the inner bight of the Solway, was the frontier fortress of England on the west of the line. Here also was a highroad from the Southern Kingdom into its northern neighbour. But, once across the Tweed at Berwick, the traveller was in fully civilised lowlands; it was quite otherwise when he crossed the Eden. Even to-day, from the window of a comfortable railway carriage, it is possible to form some image of what the past was like in which Scott's ancestors were so closely concerned.

At Carlisle the railway track diverges, and the old Midland route for Glasgow runs slightly north-west through Lockerbie. "Oh, the young Lochinvar is come out of the West," and those were the West Marches—rough country of "bank, bush and scaur," and mountains of Dumfriesshire, with rivers running down to the Solway Firth, scene of many passages in Scott's best work. But more intimately associated with his memory is the district traversed by the rail from Carlisle to Edinburgh, which runs due north, crossing and re-crossing the Esk river. Then it strikes up a great gorge in the hills, at the bottom of which flows a smaller river, the Liddell, running south to be a tributary of the Esk. Not till the top of the pass in Liddesdale is reached does the water begin to flow northwards, into Scotland proper; these streams feed Teviot, which is the river of Hawick, and which joins the Tweed. But from Teviotdale Scotland extends over the watershed southwards, down Liddesdale, down even into



Eskdale; so that exactly at this point in the Middle Marches there was no barrier of tideway, as there is on the Solway or on the Tweed estuary, nor of mountain as along the East Marches, between Scots and Englishman; and the southward flow of the water seemed to mark the country as English. Now this region of Teviotdale, Liddesdale and Eskdale was the part of the Border inhabited by the Scotts, who earned there their name of The Rough Clan. It had been the country of the Douglasses; but after the fall of that great house much of it passed to the Buccleuch family, heads of the Scott name.

The lower reaches of this southward jutting tongue of territory made for centuries the "Debateable Land," claimed by both kingdoms and administered by neither, the home of outlaws from both lands and the scene of endless raidings and counter-raidings. A road runs through it now, parallel to the railway; and even so, it is a wild and lonely place to look at, shut in by immense and peaceful slopes of grass. But in Scott's day there was not so much as a cart-track there. The first wheeled vehicle that ever came into Liddesdale was a phaeton in which he drove his wife to make friends with the Dandie Dinmonts, among whom he had so often found welcome and free quarters.

In the history of Scotland which Sir Walter wrote for his grandson, one may note his reference to the last of the great Border battles between rival clans in 1585. For it there assembled under the banner of Buccleuch "five hundred men of the clan of Scott, whom our historians term the greatest robbers and fiercest fighters among the Border clans." Their descendant certainly did not quote this judgment to disparage his clan.

Elsewhere in the *Tales of a Grandfather* Sir Walter tells a story famous in ballad verse—the rescuing of a Liddesdale reiver, Kinmont Willie, from Carlisle Castle by a band of men under Buccleuch, then Warden of the Marches. It was the last notable exploit in which Scotsmen across the border defied English power, and it was carried through without bloodshed; but the escape was due to the daring of the Borderers who swam the Eden where it ran bank-

high, before the eyes of Carlisle's Warden with his thousand men.

"All sair astonished stood Lord Scroope,  
He stood as still as a rock of stone,  
He scarcely dared to trow his eyes  
When thro' the water they had gone.

'He is either himself a devil from hell  
Or else his mother a witch maun be,  
I wadna have ridden that wan water  
For a' the goud in Christentie.'"

Walter Scott grew up when the Border was a "pacified country"; but he grew up with the stories all about him of wild deeds done by men of his own name and blood; and his first important literary work was to collect the ballads, like this of Kinmont Willie, which were still kept alive in memory on the Border.—In one thing at least he could rival the Border exploits. Horsemanship was a passion with him, and since even in his day bridges were few and far between, occasions were many for him to "ride the water," and he exulted in them. Though of course the inheritance had mainly to work itself out through fancy, the whole bent of his mind was to action and adventure; he never forgot that he was no further off than grandson to the great-grandson of "Auld Wat of Harden," whose household subsisted generously so long as the cattle lasted that he had driven from across the border or from his neighbours; when the supply drew to an end, Auld Wat's wife, "The Flower of Yarrow," was accustomed to send up to table a dish which when uncovered showed a pair of clean spurs.

But Walter Scott's favourite hero in the whole hard-fighting pedigree was "William the Boltfoot," lame from birth, but a fearless horseman and dreaded knight. Lockhart says:

"I suppose I have heard Sir Walter repeat a dozen times, as he was dashing into the Tweed or Ettrick, 'rolling ower from brae to brae' a stanza from what he called an old

ballad, though it was most likely one of his own early imitations:

“To tak the foord he aye was first  
Unless the English loons were near;  
Plunge vassal then, plunge horse and man,  
Old Boltfoot rides into the rear.”<sup>1</sup>

The river was real enough; the ford ran high; but Scott helped the adventure out with make-believe. Literature for him was, at all events to begin with, only the make-believe of great adventures. Later, when he found his true medium, it was something much more than that; yet it was never the occupation which he would have chosen—not even when it had brought him rewards that, as he says himself, “in no other walk of life he could have hoped to earn.”

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this book quotations not otherwise assigned are from the unabridged edition of Lockhart. The dates will make almost all easily traceable.

## CHAPTER II

### CHILDHOOD

1771-78

A FRAGMENT of autobiography written at Ashestiel in 1808, immediately after the publication of *Marmion*, tells the whole story of Scott's education. Lockhart has supplemented it considerably, especially correcting the moderation of statement to which Scott's modesty led him. Yet the narrative (which would make some forty pages of this book) taken simply by itself, gives the picture of a remarkable childhood with extraordinary completeness and justness of vision. There has been a tendency to set down Scott as coming short in the province of psychological analysis, and it is true that he makes little parade of such skill; yet here with a sure hand he picks out all the essential stages in the making of a poet.

He was born on August 15th, 1771, in a house belonging to his father, at the head of the College Wynd, in Edinburgh. This house had been pulled down before Scott wrote his reminiscences, and there is the less reason to regret its destruction, for of nine children born thus to the Scotts, the first six died in childhood. The next three survived, Walter being the third. They were baptised by names already used for their unlucky predecessors; Robert the eldest was the third Robert, John and Walter each was second of his name.

Shortly after Walter's birth they moved to George's Square, then recently built. Here a sister Anne about a year younger than Walter was born.

But Walter Scott was not reared among this crowd of children. After eighteen months of lusty, healthful infancy, he was struck with infantile paralysis, which completely stopped the use of his right leg. Doctor could do nothing, and on the advice of his mother's father, Dr. Rutherford, the child was sent to live in the country with his 'other grandfather, Robert Scott, at Sandyknowe, on whose farm stood the ruined peel tower of Smailholme.

Scott's memory was prodigious, and he could remember himself on the floor of the little farmhouse parlour while his grandfather used every excitement to make him try to crawl. It had been advised that whenever a sheep was killed, the child should be wrapped in the newly-flayed skin, still warm from the carcase; he could remember lying "in this Tartar-like habiliment", and remember also, not only his grandfather, but an ex-colonel of the Greys, Sir George MacDougal, "who was, God knows how! a relative of ours, —in his old-fashioned military habit, with a small cocked hat deeply laced, an embroidered scarlet waistcoat, and a light-coloured coat, with milk-white locks tied in a military fashion, kneeling on the ground before me, and dragging his watch along the carpet in order to induce me to follow it."

His grandfather, "the thatch'd mansion's grey-haired sire," is commemorated in the famous epistle introductory to the third Canto of *Marmion*.

"Wise without learning, plain and good,  
And sprung of Scotland's gentler blood;  
Whose eye, in age, quick, clear and keen,  
Show'd what in youth its glance had been;  
Whose doom discording neighbours sought,  
Content with equity unbought."

That is what Scott learnt later about his grandfather, a noted horseman in his youth, and a general referee of all feats of skill and strength. Childish memory could only keep a picture, for Robert Scott died when his grandson was three years old. The farm was kept on by his widow, assisted by her second son, who was an expert farmer, factor (that is, land steward) on a neighbouring

estate. This uncle of Sir Walter's lived on to be ninety, and to see the crippled child great and prosperous. But in these early days he was only a weekly visitor at Sandyknowe, bringing with him news of the American War and the struggle against Washington—for whose defeat the child could remember longing with great eagerness.

For the most part, Walter Scott was in the care of two women: his grandmother, who sat at her spinning wheel, and his aunt, Miss Janet Scott, who read aloud to him, and taught him to read for himself. He was the only child in the house, and an invalid child, petted and humoured, having for companions, besides his aunt and grandmother, the servants of the farm. One of these, then an old woman, told Lockhart that she remembered well how the young ewe-milkers used to carry the child on their backs among the crags about the tower, and how he "soon kenned every sheep and lamb by head-marks, as well as any of them." But specially he was in charge of the old shepherd, near whom he was laid down out of doors, and soon began, through mere childish impatience, "to stand, to walk, and to run." The leg remained shrunk, but the child became in Scott's own words "healthy, high spirited and, lameness apart, sturdy—*non sine dis animosus infans*."

Indeed, the gods that preside over the growth of genius were fruitfully at work. Schooling had not begun, except for whatever "Miss Jenny" may have imparted; but legend and history, not clearly separated, were poured into those eager ears. Mr. Curle, a farmer who had married one of Miss Jenny's sisters, had seen the executions after the battle of Culloden, where one or two outlying relations of the Scott clan had fallen; and the child got in this way his first touch of Jacobite sympathy and of detestation for the butcher, Cumberland. Also his grandmother, a Hali-burton of the Mains, "in whose youth the old Border depredations were a matter of recent tradition," used to tell him "many a tale of Wat of Harden, Wight Willie of Aikwood, Jamie Telfer of the fair Dodhead, and other heroes—merrymen all of the persuasion and calling of Robin Hood and Little John."

Long after, in January, 1813, he wrote to his friend, George Ellis, a sketch of his pedigree in less reverent terms :

"My grandfather was a horse-jockey, and cattle dealer, and made a fortune; my great-grandfather was a Jacobite and traitor (as the times called him) and lost one; and before him intervened one or two half-starved lairds who rode a lean horse and were followed by leaner greyhounds; gathered with difficulty a hundred pounds from a hundred tenants; fought duels; cocked their hats—and called themselves gentlemen. Then we come to the old Border times, cattle-driving, ha'lters, and so forth, for which in the matter of honesty very little, I suppose, can be said—at least in modern acceptance of the word. Upon the whole, I am inclined to think it is owing to the earlier part of this inauspicious generation that I uniformly find myself in the same scrape in my fables, and that in spite of the most obstinate determination to the contrary, the greatest rogue in my canvas always stands out as the most conspicuous and prominent figure."

Over and above oral traditions, two or three books that had always lain in the window-seat were now "explored" for the child's amusement. "An odd volume of Josephus's *Wars of the Jews* had its period of favour." This would supplement the Bible readings, which no Scottish child could escape, and which stored that tenacious memory with a wealth of Hebrew poetry. But the chief delight was Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany*, in which exploration discovered the ballad of Hardiknute. Long afterwards this identical copy of the *Miscellany* came to rest with honour in the library at Abbotsford, bearing a marginal note in Scott's writing: "This book belonged to my grandfather, Robert Scott, and out of it I was taught Hardiknute by heart before I could read the ballad myself. It was the first poem I ever learnt—the last I shall ever forget."

The rhythm of verse went to the child's head like wine, and he shouted Hardiknute all about him, regardless of hearers. The clergyman of the parish, almost the only visitor at Sandyknowe, tall, thin, and doleful of countenance, used to say: "One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is."

Yet, for this unmannerliness, amends were made in *Marmion*, which might well appease the shades of this—

“venerable Priest,  
Our frequent and familiar guest,  
Whose life and manners well could paint  
Alike the student and the saint;  
Alas! whose speech too oft I broke  
With gambol rude and timeless joke:  
For I was wayward, bold, and wild,  
A self-will’d imp, a grandame’s child;  
But, half a plague, and half a jest,  
Was still endured, beloved, caress’d.”

When the self-will’d imp was four years old, a charge of scene came. It was thought that Bath waters might help the lame leg, and Miss Jenny, the devoted aunt, took charge. They set off by sea from Berwick to London; the child saw and remembered with minute detail the Tower and Westminster Abbey. At Bath he and his aunt were joined by his uncle, Captain Robert Scott, then home on leave from India, who took them to the theatre.

“The play was *As You Like It*, and the witchery of the whole scene is alive in my mind at this moment. I made, I believe, noise more than enough, and remember being so much scandalized at the quarrel between Orlando and his brother, in the first scene that I screamed out, ‘A’nt they brothers?’ A few weeks’ residence at home convinced me, who had till then been an only child in the house of my grandfather, that a quarrel between brothers was a very natural event.”

This experience of discipline from elder brothers did not come till later. The child was left for a year at Bath, where an old dame taught him definitely to read. But in the autumn of 1777 Miss Janet and he returned to Scotland and spent some weeks in George’s Square. He “felt the change from being a single, indulged brat to becoming a member of a large family, very severely”; but a sketch of him at this moment shows how the lonely upbringing had developed him, in ways that no large family would have ever tolerated in one of the younger brothers. Mrs.



Cockburn, an accomplished lady, by birth a Rutherford, and a cousin of Scott's mother, spent an evening in the house, and wrote of it to her parish minister.

" . . . I last night supped in Mr. Walter Scott's. He has the most extraordinary genius of a boy I ever saw. He was reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on; it was the description of a shipwreck. His passion rose with the storm. He lifted his eyes and hands. 'There's the mast gone,' says he; 'crash it goes!—they will all perish!' After his agitation, he turns to me. 'That is too melancholy,' says he, 'I had better read you something more amusing.' I preferred a little chat, and asked his opinion of Milton and other books he was reading, which he gave me wonderfully. One of his observations was, 'How strange it is that Adam, just new come into the world, should know everything—that must be the poet's fancy,' says he. But when he was told he was created perfect by God, he instantly yielded. When taken to bed last night, he told his aunt he liked that lady. 'What lady?' says she. 'Why, Mrs. Cockburn; for I think she is a virtuoso like myself,' 'Dear Walter,' says Aunt Jenny, 'what is a virtuoso?' 'Don't ye know? Why, it's one who wishes and will know everything.' Now, sir, you will think this a very silly story. Pray, what age do you suppose this boy to be? Name it now, before I tell you. Why, twelve or fourteen. —No such thing; he is not quite six years old! He has a lame leg, for which he was a year at Bath, and has acquired the perfect English accent, which he has not lost since he came, and he reads like a Garrick, You will allow this an uncommon exotic."

Elder brothers had not yet the chance to smack the head of this young virtuoso and tell him that he was showing off. He went back to Sandyknowe till he was getting on to eight years old, when he notes that he was taken for sea bathing to Prestonpans, and made friends with a veteran retired on an ensign's half-pay after a life spent in "all the German wars." This gentleman's name was Captain Dalgetty. "Finding very few to listen to his tales of military feats, he formed a sort of alliance with me, and I used invariably to attend him for the pleasure of hearing those communications." How much beside the name of this old warrior survives imperishably, no one can say; for when Scott wrote this fragment of autobiography, all that existed

of the Waverley Novels was a few forgotten sheets stuffed away in a drawer; and the Dalgetty who is immortal had not yet been born or thought of. But assuredly these communications to the lame child had their notable reward.

From Prestonpans the boy went back to George's Square, and home life, and schooling. Sandyknowe remained for some time a place to be visited in vacations; but the period was ended over which the old peel tower of Smailholme held its sway.

Smailholme is among the hundred and one places of pilgrimage in that countryside visited by those who seek out memories of Sir Walter; and here if anywhere, realisation of the past is easily possible. Winding by-roads lead to the farm buildings, which are of later date; slate has replaced thatch; but the house comprises somewhere in its fabric the walls that sheltered Scott's childhood. Even enlarged as it now is, the place is neither big nor impressive; yet it is evidently the centre of a good farm, for in 1928 it possessed the champion shire horse of all Scotland, and the fields and hills about were covered with mares and foals. From the house upwards, all the hill slope is untouched by the plough; craggy faces of rock break steeply through the grass; it would be rough ground to ride over, but it was there that Scott learnt to ride. For when he came back from Bath his uncle set him up on a Shetland, "no bigger than a Newfoundland dog," and on this steed he alarmed his aunt by cantering over the rough places about the tower. The tower itself stands on a detached hillock, at whose foot is a little loch; it is the ordinary square-sided keep, about thirty foot high; and it is set in a place of wide prospect. As Lockhart says, it overlooks a district where "every field has its battle, and every rivulet its song"; its view ranges across "Mertoun's wood and Tweed's fair flood and all down Teviotdale"; the triple peaks of Eildon, most marked of all objects in that countryside, stand out; far away to the east is the mounded outline of Cheviot, and westward are the mountains above Gala, Ettrick and Yarrow; while by the side of Tweed can be traced the ruins of Melrose and of Dryburgh. These

are names, all of them, only less famous in the world through magic of literature than those of mountain, river, hill and town in Thessaly or Argolis. Not one poet or maker alone has wrought their magic for them; but not all other makers together have given it such potency as the crippled child who learnt to clamber and be bold among the rocks of Smailholme above Sandyknowe. While *Marmion* continues to be read, none will forget how Scott justified in the Epistle prefixed to the third canto his constant application to Scottish themes.—Each to his own, he says; the Belgian “loves to see the white sail gliding by the tree,” the Highland shepherd will not barter for the richest English meadows, “his dark Lochaber’s boundless range.” And then he sketches the images that come up before him when he seeks to “ape the measure wild Of tales that charm’d me yet a child.”

“Then rise those crags, that mountain tower  
Which charm’d my fancy’s wakening hour.  
Though no broad river swept along,  
To claim, perchance, heroic song;  
Though sighed no groves in summer gale,  
To prompt of love a softer tale;  
Though scarce a puny streamlet’s speed  
Claim’d homage from a shepherd’s reed;  
Yet was poetic impulse given,  
By the green hill and clear blue heaven.  
It was a barren scene, and wild,  
Where naked cliffs were rudely piled;  
But ever and anon between  
Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green;  
And well the lonely infant knew  
Recesses where the wall-flower grew,  
And honey-suckle loved to crawl  
Up the low crag and ruin’d wall.  
I deemed such nooks the sweetest shade  
The sun in all its round surveyed;  
And still I thought that shatter’d tower  
The mightiest work of human power,  
And marvell’d as the aged hind  
With some strange tale bewitch’d my mind,  
Of forayers, who, with headlong force,  
Down from that strength had spur’d their horse,

Their southern rapine to renew,  
 Far in the distant Cheviots blue,  
 And, home returning, fill'd the hall  
 With revel, wassel-rout, and brawl.  
 Methought that still with trump and clang  
 The gateway's broken arches rang;  
 Methought grim features, seam'd with scars,  
 Glared through the window's rusty bars,  
 And ever, by the winter hearth,  
 Old tales I heard of woe or mirth,  
 Of lovers' slights, of ladies' charms,  
 Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms;  
 Of patriot battles, won of old  
 By Wallace wight and Bruce the bold;  
 Of later fields of feud and fight,  
 When, pouring from their Highland height,  
 The Scottish clans, in headlong sway,  
 Had swept the scarlet ranks away,  
 While stretch'd at length upon the floor,  
 Again I fought each combat o'er,  
 Pebbles and shells, in order laid,  
 The mimic ranks of war display'd;  
 And onward still the Scottish Lion bore,  
 And still the scatter'd Southron fled before."

It may be said that the poetical romances by which Scott first became famous grew out of these childish imaginings; that in them a grown man uses all his adult accomplishment and knowledge to give body and voice to what might have been invented by an extraordinary child.—The later work, in prose, by which he holds his title to greatness, is based on wide and vivid experience of actual life; but at the back of it lay the same gift for building up imaginary scenes. "Since I was five years old," he wrote in his Journal, when age and sorrow had come over him, "I cannot remember the time when I had not some ideal part to play for my own solitary amusement."

Also, running through all his work, the greater and the lesser, the later and the earlier, is found this double motive, sketched out in those lines of *Marmion*—love for his country and its history, and passion for the beautiful countryside on which, through early and life-long association, that love centred and dwelt.

## CHAPTER III

### BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

1779-95

IF the years of childhood were the most important for the making of the poet, family life, school and college made the man. It was not easy for a "single indulged brat" to take his place in a herd; the less so because Scott had throughout life a temper not easily brooking restraint, and a capacity for intense feeling, ill-suited with that stoicism which he counted manly. He speaks of the "agony" which he "internally experienced" in this "period of mortification." Naturally, his mother took the lame child, this new-comer in the nest, under special care. She encouraged him to spend his leisure in reading aloud to her, and chose Pope's translation of Homer "which excepting a few traditional ballads and the songs in Alan Ramsay's *Evergreen* was the first poetry which I perused." But also in her dressing-room, where the boy slept at this time, were some volumes of Shakespeare; "nor can I easily forget the rapture with which I sat up in my shirt reading them by the light of a fire in her apartment until the bustle of the family rising from supper warned me it was time to creep back to my bed, where I was supposed to have been safely deposited since nine o'clock."

So began a lifelong devotion. Scarcely any man that ever lived can have known Shakespeare with so wide a familiarity, as a thousand quotations from the plays or allusions to them in Scott's work could prove. But the essential proof of allegiance or even of discipleship is else-

where. Scott the poet had his Scottish models for what he wrote in verse; (Scott the novelist treated historical subjects in the manner of Shakespeare.)

For a Scottish child, gentle or simple, school meant a day-school, and the High School of Edinburgh was not, and is not, peopled by boys drawn only from one class; it was an institution much more like a French Lycée than any English public school. Walter Scott started under a heavy handicap, for he had received no continuous teaching, and so was placed much lower in a big class than his talents would have warranted. His comment later was that a clever boy "placed even for a time among his inferiors, especially if they be his elders," learns to adopt their interests "which are usually very distinct from the acquisition of learning"; and to all appearances he was a clever boy, lazy among the stupid, though occasionally some flash of out-of-the-way knowledge would send him to the top. But already one gift of his mind showed itself conspicuous: in winter-time, or in wet weather, the other boys would crowd round him, "and happy was he that could sit next the inexhaustible narrator."

He won respect too in other ways. Nothing could have reconciled him to be anything but a fighter; and Lockhart tells that when he made his first appearance in the "yards" (or playgrounds), some dispute rose, and the other lad said it was "no use to argle-bargle with a cripple." Then said Boltfoot's descendant, that he would fight anyone of his size, mounted; whereupon an elder boy conceived the idea of pitting the two youngsters against each other, tied face to face astraddle on a board. In that attitude, says Scott, "I received my first bloody nose," and apparently it established a precedent. When he fought thereafter, that was the way of it, and a hard way for opponents; for he had exceptional strength of arm and shoulder, and as a young man grew able to lift a smith's anvil in one hand by its "horn." This strength stood to him at school for other feats: the Castle Rock offered tests for climbers; and he was one of the best on "the kittle nine stanes," a

difficult passage of steps and handholds on the precipitous cliff.

Besides quarrels in school, there used to be external war: with snowballs (at times enclosing stones) against the Town Guard, a police of half-pay veterans, but more often against boys from some other quarter of the town. The Scott brothers, along with other lads belonging to George's Square, formed a company at constant "bicker" with youngsters from the neighbouring suburb—"chiefly of the lower rank, but handy loons who threw stones to a hair's breadth." In the General Introduction to the novels, Scott has recounted one special fray in which, to the horror of all concerned, the opposing leader was cut down with a hanger that had been unwisely entrusted to one defender of the George's Square standard. Smart-money was offered by Scott and his brothers ("through the medium of a popular gingerbread baker") to the wounded hero, who was under treatment at the Infirmary; but he stoutly refused to name his wounder. Like a true hero, he also refused the money, saying that "he would not sell his blood"; and this knightly conduct secured him veneration, though not immunity, in later battles.

In 1781—that is to say shortly after his tenth birthday—Walter Scott was promoted to the first class, under the Rector of the High School; and here he began to learn enough Latin to extract pleasure from the authors that he studied. At the same time, he with his brothers got private tuition from a Mr. Mitchell, who had been "bred to the kirk" and appointed to a living in a seaport town, where this minister thought it necessary to convince his congregation of the guilt they must incur by setting sail of a Sabbath, on which day sailors count it specially lucky to weigh anchor. Failure in this missionary effort so grieved the Presbyterian that he resigned his cure and fell back on teaching—a trade which Scott thought so toilsome as to believe that nothing but vanity could bring any man into it "who has arms to pare and burn a muir." Yet Mr. Mitchell has left a loving picture of the time he spent in Mr. Scott's household, and his famous pupil has described

him kindly. But the successful poet who in 1808 wrote this sketch of his old tutor had no idea that he was depicting the formation of a Scottish novelist, not yet launched. How many of the Waverley Novels are called up, by this passage in the Ashestiel fragment!

"I acquired by disputing with him (for this he readily permitted), some knowledge of school-divinity and church-history, and a great acquaintance in particular with the old books describing the early history of the Church of Scotland, the wars and sufferings of the Covenanters, and so forth. I, with a head of fire for chivalry, was a Cavalier; my friend was a Roundhead; I was a Tory, and he was a Whig. I hated Presbyterians, and admired Montrose with his victorious Highlanders; he liked the Presbyterian Ulysses, the dark and politic Argyle; so that we never wanted subjects of dispute; but our disputes were always amicable. In all these tenets there was no real conviction on my part, arising out of acquaintance with the views or principles of either party; nor had my antagonist address enough to turn the debate on such topics. I took up my politics at that period, as King Charles II. did his religion, from an idea that the Cavalier creed was the more gentlemanlike persuasion of the two."

Mitchell remembered Walter Scott as being about twelve or thirteen when he began these lessons; but it seems as if he overstated the age of the boy, who then laid the foundations of those observations on which he was to build later *Old Mortality* and *The Heart of Midlothian*.—Two years in the Rector's class finished Scott's High School studies in 1783; and then, according to the usual routine, he would have gone straight to college. Even now, student life begins earlier in Scotland than at Oxford or Cambridge; and in those days it began younger still. But it was thought well that for half a year he should go back to the care of his aunt, Miss Janet Scott, who had moved from Sandyknowe to a little house at Kelso—still marked as one of the places of pilgrimage. In those days its garden of seven or eight acres, laid out towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, stretched down to the Tweed: Scott has described it in his *Essay on Landscape Gardening*:



"It was full of long straight walks, between hedges of yew and hornbeam, which rose tall and close on every side. There were thickets of flowery shrubs, a bower, and an arbour, to which access was obtained through a little maze of contorted walks calling itself a labyrinth. In the centre of the bower was a splendid *Platanus*, or Oriental plane—a huge hill of leaves—one of the noblest specimens of that regularly beautiful tree which I remember to have seen. In different parts of the garden were fine ornamental trees, which had attained great size, and the orchard was filled with fruit trees of the best description. There were seats, and hilly walks, and a banqueting house. I visited this scene lately, after an absence of many years. Its air of retreat, the seclusion which its alleys afforded, was entirely gone; the huge *Platanus* had died, like most of its kind, in the beginning of this century; the hedges were cut down, the trees stubbed up, and the whole character of the place so destroyed, that I was glad when I could leave it."

It may be that since then some occupant has tried to reproduce the features which Scott described, for the little lawn in front of the house is bounded by a rectangular hedge of yew in the Dutch taste, and one seems to trace the lines of other enclosures beyond; but the seven or eight acres have shrunk to less than one, nor is there direct access to the river bank. But it was at Kelso that Scott first came under the spell of that beautiful water beside whose banks he made his home, and beside whose banks, in the very heart of romance and of beauty, his dust is laid.

All the poet in him had begun to stir already. Ossian and Spenser were now made known to him; Macpherson soon palled, but "Spenser I could have read for ever." Yet it was hardly as "the poets' poet," master of harmonious metre and of lovely words, that Spenser appealed to Scott: it was for his matter that the boy read him. "Too young to trouble myself about the allegory, I considered all the knights and ladies and dragons and giants in their outward and exoteric sense, and God only knows how delighted I was to find myself in such society." Yet the born writer's ear and perception are soon subdued to what they work in, and it was impossible that Scott should learn by heart, as he did, enormous quantities of Spenser, without enriching and beautifying his whole power of expression. He had

begun to write verses, for tasks at school, and for his own pleasure—not remarkably; but above all he was saturating his mind from the great flood of books. “I waded into the stream like a blind man into a ford, without the power of searching my way unless by groping for it.”

In his groping he hit upon Bishop Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*.

“As I had been from infancy devoted to legendary lore of this nature, and only reluctantly withdrew my attention, from the scarcity of materials and the rudeness of those which I possessed, it may be imagined, but cannot be described, with what delight I saw pieces of the same kind which had amused my childhood, and still continued in secret the Delilahs of my imagination, considered as the subject of sober research, grave commentary, and apt illustration, by an editor who showed his poetical genius was capable of emulating the best qualities of what his pious labour preserved. I remember well the spot where I read these volumes for the first time. It was beneath a huge platanus-tree, in the ruins of what had been intended for an old-fashioned arbour in the garden I have mentioned. The summer-day sped onward so fast, that, notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, I forgot the hour of dinner, was sought for with anxiety, and was still found entranced in my intellectual banquet. To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my schoolfellows, and all who would hearken to me, with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy. The first time, too, I could scrape a few shillings together, which were not common occurrences with me, I bought unto myself a copy of these beloved volumes; nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm.”

Over and above the new delights of literature came the “awakening of that delightful feeling for the beauties of natural objects which has never since deserted me.” Kelso, “at the meeting of two superb rivers, the Tweed and the Teviot, both famous in song,” could appeal at once to the eye and to the mind. The ruins of its ancient Abbey, and of Roxburgh Castle—its modern mansion of Fleurs, the Duke of Roxburgh’s house, “so situated as to combine the ideas of ancient baronial grandeur with those of modern taste”—all seemed to him “objects each possessing the

highest individual interest, yet so blended with each other and with the surrounding beauties of wood, water and hill that they please rather by unison than by concord."

"From this time," he adds, "the love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins, or remains of our fathers' piety or splendour, became with me an insatiable passion, which if circumstances had permitted I would willingly have gratified by travelling over half the globe."

Happily for us, most of his travelling had to be done in his own country; and how he knew and loved the beauty of Scotland, and the historic associations of that beauty, his works are there to testify.

While the sensuous side of his imagination was thus being awakened and nourished, the adventure-loving part continued to find food everywhere, which was stored in memory as a squirrel lays by nuts. He looked back on this time from the height of his achievement, in 1827, writing to one who had been for twenty years his literary confidant, Lady Louisa Stuart:

"I was always a willing listener to tales of broil and battles and hubbub of every kind, and now I look back on it, I think what a godsend I must have been to the old Trojans of 1745, nay, 1715, who used to frequent my father's house, and who knew as little as I did for what market I was laying up the raw materials of their oft told tales. My choice friend was a certain Alaster Stuart of Invernahyle. . . . I shall never forget one of his answers to me. I was, I suppose, about ten years old, and, seated on his knee, listened to his warlike exploits, of which he was no unwilling narrator. 'O Inver' (this was his familiar and pet name in the family), 'will you tell me if you were ever afraid?' 'Troth, Gordie, mavourneen,' said the old man, 'the first time I gaed into action, when I saw the red coats rank opposite to us, and our people put up their bonnets to say a bit prayer, and then scrug their bonnets down ower their een, and set forward like bulls, driving each other on, and beginning to fire their guns and draw their broadswords, I would have given any man a thousand merk to insure me I wad not run away.'"

In November, 1783, Scott entered college. This was in a sense more like the English schoolboy's transition from

a private to a public school than from school to university; yet in important respects it differed. First, he was still living at home, part of the family circle and under the family discipline, which was strict and in particular rigidly Sabbatarian; no books were allowed on Sundays except a few works of edification. Secondly, he had very much more freedom and control of his own time than a schoolboy; and thirdly, he was under the direct teaching of professors of a great university. So far as the freedom went, he used it by a total refusal to learn Greek, and grew up wholly ignorant of that language—a lack which later he very much regretted. Apart from the 'Humanity' class in Latin, he read ethics, history, and moral philosophy; this last was taught by Dugald Stewart, "whose striking and impressive eloquence riveted the attention even of the most volatile student." But, as always happens, and more specially with such an irregular learner, the main education was given by himself and by the companions whom he chose. Chief of these at this time was John Irving, and the two boys used to load themselves with books from the circulating library—seeking especially after romances of knight-errantry. On Saturdays they would set off with their burden to Salisbury Crags or Arthur's Seat, and scramble to the most inaccessible cliff corners—Scott leading at this cragsman's game. English romances could not keep them supplied; they read the French, too; they learnt Italian for a greater range of pasture—indeed, Scott at least learnt to read Spanish for the same purposes. German he acquired later, for rather different attractions; but none of these languages was ever so familiar to him that he could appreciate an author's style. What he wanted was the matter, the story. After a while, he and his friend Irving began the practice of making up romances for themselves—carrying on from one recital to another the stories of their favourite knights, whom they cherished too much ever to allow them to be killed.

This course of life was interrupted in Walter Scott's second year of college by a serious illness, the bursting of a blood-vessel in his bowels, and he had to submit for many

months to an invalid régime and vegetarian diet. His main resource was the study of military history. The lines in *Marmion* describe how in his childhood at Sandyknowe:

“Pebbles and shells in order laid,  
The mimic ranks of war display’d.”

Yet in truth it was the bedridden collegian who had recourse to this “childish expedient,” contriving “diminutive crossbows” for artillery, and modelling a fortress “which like that of Uncle Toby represented whatever place happened to be uppermost in my imagination.”—It was the enforced training of a writer of martial romances.

After a time, convalescence advanced so far that he could be taken to his beloved Kelso, but not this time to be the guest of his aunt. Her brother, Captain Robert Scott had retired from the naval service of the East India Company, and bought Rosebank, still a pleasant villa standing in its own grounds, a gunshot back from the Tweed. Here, through all his youth, Walter Scott had a home; and here he found a companion in his uncle who put him in the way of outdoor sports. Guns and fishing-rods were there at his disposal, and mounts for the horseman.

He seems to have returned to college life in the autumn of 1786. It was already settled that the law should be his profession; and whether he should finally decide to become an Advocate or a Writer to the Signet, (that is, barrister or solicitor), Mr. Scott considered that five years of ordinary apprenticeship to himself would give the pupil much knowledge “useful if not essential to a barrister.” Accordingly the father and son signed indentures. This meant that over and above his college work, the boy from fifteen years of age on had to do much office drudgery and enjoyed very little time for amusement. Moreover, he was kept very short of money; but since the task of copying legal documents was paid for (at the rate of threepence a folio) Scott could acquire a fund “for the circulating library and the theatre.” He could remember

writing one hundred and twenty folio pages without stopping for food or rest; this would be equal to sixty pages of an ordinary book. His pen went early into training, and heaven knows, training was needed. Very few men have driven the quill so fast or so far.

But the power of work which he always possessed was not greater than his zest for enjoyment, and whenever the chance offered he was on foot or horseback with his companions—generally to visit some place of beauty or historic interest.

“I remember walking with poor James Ramsay, my fellow-apprentice, now no more, and two other friends, to breakfast at Prestonpans. We spent the forenoon in visiting the ruins at Seton, and the field of battle at Preston—dined at Prestonpans on *tiled haddocks* very sumptuously—drank half a bottle of port each, and returned in the evening. This could not be less than thirty miles, nor do I remember being at all fatigued upon the occasion.”

Scott was alive to all the enjoyments, and whether in his Journal or his novels, there is seldom mention of a meal without some detail of what composed it; while, as for liquor, a very full treatise could be composed from his works, on what was drunk in Scotland during his lifetime, and before it: what wines, what ale, what spirits, and from what kind of glasses, and in what quantities. He was convivial, and the Scottish undergraduates did at times drink too much. Scott was no exception, but if he exceeded, it was out of bravado in his youth, or, later, out of good-fellowship; and the habit got no hold on him. Once he married and settled down, sobriety was his strict rule; for he held, as Lockhart says, that “of all vices, drinking is the most incompatible with greatness.” The *Waverley Novels* make it plain enough that he liked a man able to enjoy his wine and to carry his wine; but that he thought even occasional intoxication a slur on a gentleman, and regarded drunkards with contempt, which might sometimes (for instance in the picture of Nanty-Ewart in *Redgauntlet*) be tinged with pity.

He did, however, in later life, regret the injury done to his health by some of these early extravagances—undertaken mainly to prove that the “poor lamiter” was as hardy a man as the best. In March 1827, after struggling out, in broken health, to face rough weather, he noted in his Journal:

“There is a touch of the old spirit in me yet that bids me brave the tempest—the spirit that in spite of manifold infirmities made me a roaring boy in my youth, a desperate climber, a bold rider, a deep drinker, and a stout player at singlestick—of all which valuable qualities there are now but slender remains.”

But the general society of Edinburgh held attractions more than enough to an intelligent man, outside the circle where hard drinking was the fashion. The capital of Scotland had indeed lost the presence of a separate legislature; but it was the seat of the judiciary and of the military establishments; it was a university town; thus it kept all the character of a metropolis, with a very special distinction of its own. Scott, who never lost an occasion to celebrate the glories of his native land, found his chance early in the series of the Waverleys to set out the praise of Edinburgh as it was in his boyhood. When Colonel Mannering finds himself obliged unexpectedly to spend two or three days in the city, he looks over the bundle of introductions thrust into his hand by the eminent advocate whom he has consulted. The list included Adam Smith, David Hume, Robertson the historian, and John Home the author of *Douglas*, with others not so familiar now-a-days, but then recognised as among “the first literary characters of Scotland.” The period which this latter part of the novel represents would lie in the “’seventies” of that century, ten or fifteen years before Scott’s student days. It was the circle of David Hume’s last years which he described in *Guy Mannering* as “never closed against strangers of sense and information, and perhaps at no period equalled, considering the depth and variety of talent which it embraced and concentrated.” Yet in

Scott's prime, when he and Jeffrey were its chief ornaments, Edinburgh society stood higher in the world's esteem than in Hume's lifetime, or indeed, at any time in the eighteenth century; and during his student days, Edinburgh's streets and gatherings saw from time to time the greatest of all Scottish poets. In Sibbald's circulating library, Scott while a schoolboy set eyes on "the boast of Scotland, Robert Burns," and, at the age of fifteen, "would have given the world to know him." "As it was," he wrote in a letter designed to be used in Lockhart's sketch of Burns,

"I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Fergusson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course we youngsters sate silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns' manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on the one side, on the other his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

'Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,  
Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain;  
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,  
The big drops, mingling with the milk he drew  
Gave the sad presage of his future years,  
The child of misery baptized in tears.'

"Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of the Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word which, though of mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with very great pleasure. •

"His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture, but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I



would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school—*i.e.*, none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gude* man who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literally, *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

"I remember on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns' acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited, and also, that having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models; there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate."

That passage is worth careful study, not only for the memory of a most characteristic encounter and for the picture given by one great writer of another, but as an example of Scott's prose. He never wrote better, except (but the exception includes all his greatest passages) when he was writing dramatically. This is manifestly written exactly as he would have spoken it, having nothing to dramatise; but it keeps, what much of his writing loses, the inflections of a living voice. It illustrates also the charm of Scott's talk, which many held to be unsurpassable. He never sought after epigrams or ingenious phrases; he had no love of argument: but from an inexhaustible store of memory, filled by observation no less than by reading, he could pour out narrative or description without stint or stay.

The "eminent literary characters" whom Scott in his college days came to know are of no great interest to us. But his college life offered him choice of good company among those of his own age. One of his friends was the son of the famous General, Sir Ralph Abercromby; another was Lord Dalhousie, the ninth earl, distinguished as a General under Wellington, and father of the more famous Governor-General of India. Since he was a law student, his associates were specially drawn from that group, and several were future Lords of Session. Making friends with the young men led to friendships with their families, and so widened his contacts with the world; for his father and mother went abroad little and received little. But, as he says, in the last words of his *Ashestiel Memoir*:

"It is not difficult for a youth, with a real desire to please and be pleased, to make his way into good society in Edinburgh—or indeed anywhere; and my family connexions, if they did not greatly further, had nothing to embarrass my progress. I was a gentleman, and so welcome anywhere, if so be I could behave myself, as Tony Lumpkin says, 'in a concatenation accordingly.'"

There is, however, generally some one friendship which counts for more than the rest, even with a youth who has, what Walter Scott had pre-eminently, the genius for making friends; and William Clerk, son of Sir John Clerk, of Pennycuik House (about ten miles from Edinburgh, on the road to Peebles) was the special intimate of Scott's early life. They met first in the essay-reading and debating societies, which are part of the means by which young men in the undergraduate stage give themselves and each other the most fruitful part of education.

In three of these institutions Scott played a large part, and two were the creation of his own set. There was the Literary Society, purely and simply for debate—in which Scott never shone; though here as everywhere, he could surprise a company by his memory and his out of the way knowledge. There was a smaller and more convivial gathering called The Club, which met in a room and then

adjourned to sup at an oyster tavern. It had nineteen members originally, and it was maintained until some were distinguished and some were famous and some—including the most famous of all—were dead. If a man is companionable, he is apt to get nicknames, and Walter Scott bore this mark of popularity. He was "Duns Scotus" in the Literary, and "Colonel Grogg" in the Club.

The third society was the Speculative, illustrious then and since then. Its active membership was and is less than twenty; Scott was secretary and treasurer, but at a time when he had passed out of the undergraduate stage.

William Clerk was with Walter Scott in all these companies, and was also most closely associated with him from the time when it was settled that Scott, instead of entering into partnership with his father on the conclusion of his apprenticeship and enjoying at once an independent income, should venture for the bar and leave the safe and easy way to his younger brother, Thomas.

This meant three years more of preliminary study. These were "the only years in which I applied to learning with stern steady and undeviating industry," says Scott; and he desired William Clerk's company in that as in other pursuits. The pair agreed that each was daily to examine the other on certain points of law, meeting alternately at each other's homes. But Scott lived in George's Square, and Clerk at the farther end of Prince's Street in the fashionable New Town—two miles apart, and the hour appointed was seven in the morning. It was soon found that Clerk, who through life united great ability to even more notable indolence, could not possibly be got out of bed; and so with great punctuality Scott "beat him up to his task," tramping the two miles back and forward through the whole of two summer vacations. The net result was that William Clerk and Walter Scott passed their qualifying examinations on the same days and finally on July 11th, 1792, "assumed the gown with all its duties and honours." Mingling with the crowd of Advocates who stand in the Outer Court of the Parlia-

ment House, available to the approach of any who has a brief to offer, they watched and waited, till Scott "mimicking the air and tone of a Highland lass waiting at the Cross of Edinburgh to be hired for the harvest work, said to his comrade, 'We've stood here an hour by the Tron, hinny, and deil a ane has speered our price.'"

From that time to the end of his active life a great part of Scott's time was spent in the "Parliament House" and the Courts of Edinburgh. For the next ten years his whole occupation lay there, and he had no inkling of finding his fortune anywhere else. Yet plainly enough the driving force that was in him did not make itself felt in these pursuits. He was at the bar, first and chiefly because he could not follow his two elder brothers, who had gone, one to the navy, one to the army; and secondly, because the chief desire of his father's heart was to see him a successful advocate.

There are many passages in the *Waverley* Novels which throw light directly on Scott's history; and in particular the introduction to *Waverley* describes graphically, though with disparagement, his early mental equipment. But there is only one novel in the series which may be regarded almost as a chapter of autobiography, for into it Scott has put portraits of William Clerk and of himself, though in fancifully imagined circumstances; he has also put a study of his father and of himself in a setting that is entirely familiar, though the particular happenings are invented.

We have two portraits of Mr. Walter Scott from his son's pen, and it is instructive and amusing to compare them. The first comes in the *Ashestiel* Memoir—written six years before the novelist found his vocation. It describes an old-fashioned Scottish gentleman, much more interested in theology than in law, who played truant from his law books to read Calvinistic folios, exactly as his son hid the *Decameron* or *Froissart* under the papers on his desk. Yet diligent the elder Scott was, and able, and upright; indeed, if he did not make a fortune, it was largely, in his son's opinion, because contrary to the

usage, he too often let his clients overreach and plunder him.

Here now is the novelist's portrait. Alan Fairford in *Redgauntlet*, confronted with his father at supper, has to admit that he had that day ridden out to dinner at Noble House, the first stage inn on the road to Dumfries. The interview is reported in a letter from Alan to Darsie Latimer—whose prototype was William Clerk.

He started (you know his way,) as if I had said that I had dined at Jericho; and as I did not choose to seem to observe his surprise, but continued munching my radishes in tranquillity, he broke forth in ire.

'To Noble-House, sir! and what had you to do at Noble-House, sir?—Do you remember you are studying law, sir?—that your Scots law trials are coming on, sir?—that every moment of your time just now is worth hours at another time? and have you leisure to go to Noble-House, sir?—and to throw your books behind you for so many hours?—Had it been a turn in the meadows, or even a game at golf—but Noble-House, sir!'

'I went so far with Darsie Latimer, sir, to see him begin his journey.'

'Darsie Latimer?' he replied in a softened tone.—'Humph!—Well, I do not blame you for being kind to Darsie Latimer; but it would have done as much good if you had walked with him as far as the toll-bar, and then made your farewells—it would have saved horse-hire—and your reckoning, too, at dinner.'

'Latimer paid that, sir,' I replied, thinking to soften the matter; but I had much better have left it unspoken.

'The reckoning, sir?' replied my father. 'And did you sponge upon any man for a reckoning? Sir, no man should enter the door of a public-house without paying his lawing.'

'I admit the general rule, sir,' I replied, 'but this was a parting-cup between Darsie and me; and I should conceive it fell under the exception of *Doch an dorroch*.'

'You think yourself a wit,' said my father, with as near an approach to a smile as ever he permits to gild the solemnity of his features; 'but I reckon you did not eat your dinner standing, like the Jews at their Passover? and it was decided in a case before the town-bailies of Cupar-Angus, when Luckie Simpson's cow had drunk up Luckie Jameson's browst of ale, while it stood in the door to cool, that there was no damage to pay, because the crummie drank without sitting down; such

being the very circumstance constituting *Doch an dorroch*, which is a standing drink, for which no reckoning is paid. Ha, sir! what says your advocateship (*fieri*) to that? *Exceptio firmat regulam*—But come, fill your glass, Alan; I am not sorry ye have shown this attention to Darsie Latimer, who is a good lad”

More dialogue follows, which emphasises the parsimony and the pedantry and the severity of the old-world Scots lawyer. But then come softening touches. Alan Fairford does affectionate justice to the memory of one whose portrait all Edinburgh must have recognised:

Latimer, I will tell you no lies. I wish my father would allow me a little more exercise of my free will, were it but that I might feel the pleasure of doing what would please him of my own accord. A little more spare time, and a little more money to enjoy it, would, besides, neither misbecome my age nor my condition; and it is, I own, provoking to see so many in the same situation winging the air at freedom, while I sit here, caged up like a cobbler's linnet, to chant the same unvaried lesson from sunrise to sunset, not to mention the listening to so many lectures against idleness, as if I enjoyed or was making use of the means of amusement! But then I cannot at heart blame either the motive or the object of this severity. For the motive, it is and can only be my father's anxious, devoted, and unremitting affection and zeal for my improvement, with a laudable sense of the honour of the profession to which he has trained me.

“As we have no near relations, the tie betwixt us is of even unusual closeness, though in itself one of the strongest which nature can form. I am, and have all along been, the exclusive object of my father's anxious hopes, and his still more anxious and engrossing fears; so what title have I to complain, although now and then these fears and hopes lead him to take a troublesome and incessant charge of all my motions? Besides, I ought to recollect, and, Darsie, I do recollect, that my father, upon various important occasions, has shown that he can be indulgent as well as strict. The leaving his old apartments in the Luckenbooths was to him like divorcing the soul from the body; yet Dr. R—— did but hint that the better air of this new district was more favourable to my health, as I was then suffering under the penalties of too rapid a growth, when he exchanged his old and beloved quarters, adjacent to the very Heart of Mid-Lothian, for one of these new tenements (entire within themselves) which modern taste has so lately introduced.”

In a strict sense this is not autobiography; Scott was one of six children in his father's house. Yet his two elder brothers had gone, one into the navy, one into the army; and the two younger probably showed little promise, as certainly they never made good; and it is a fact that Mr. Scott's move to George's Square was undertaken while Walter was the infant.

As the story develops, and takes control (for Scott was never master of his subconsciousness, which created people who insisted on doing and speaking for themselves) we get farther away from realities. Yet there may well be more than a touch of reminiscence in this passage.

My father has of late taken me frequently along with him when he attends the Courts, in his anxiety to see me properly initiated into the practical forms of business. I own I feel something on his account, and my own from this over-anxiety, which, I dare say, renders us both ridiculous. But what signifies my repugnance! my father drags me up to his counsel learned in the law,—‘Are you quite ready to come on to-day, Mr. Crossbite?—This is my son, designed for the bar.—I take the liberty to bring him with me to-day to the consultation, merely that he may see how these things are managed.’

“Mr. Crossbite smiles and bows, as a lawyer smiles on the solicitor who employs him, and I dare say, thrusts his tongue into his cheek, and whispers into the first great wig that passes him, ‘What the d——l does old Fairford mean by letting loose his whelp on me?’

But the real Saunders Fairford does not begin to display himself till we reach the famous chapter which tells how the old Writer to the Signet seized at a chance to throw his young swimmer in off the deep-end—launching him as the advocate temporarily appointed to plead the case of Poor Peter Peebles, who had been suing *in formâ pauperis* for a matter of fifteen years. It is like a fairy-tale of the law courts; how the old lawyer-father by his love and devotion and skill contrives to make an endless tangle clear to his son the Advocate, and how the young Advocate, by candour combined with intelligence, is on the point of winning a clear decision in a case which had been bandied from plea to plea till the litigant had

lost both wits and wealth—and how finally, by a hazard, the whole was upset. There is nothing told here of what really happened at any time in Scott's life, but we are made to feel the mingled pride and affection of the father and the mingled affection and dutiful effort of the son. A touch of caricature, no doubt, enters into Scott's portrait of his father, but none that detracts from the image of a just and honourable and able, if somewhat pedantic, Scottish gentleman.

At the same time, there is no blinking the fact that Scott's father did not care a brass farthing for all that Scott himself valued most highly, and that he despised the studies which eventually led his son to greatness. The opening chapters of *Rob Roy* suggest the clashes that resulted from such an incompatibility. Mr Scott, the Writer to the Signet, may well have been as unkindly critical as was Mr. Osbaldistone, the London merchant, when he found a copy of verses mixed up with business papers on his son's desk.

In short, whenever Scott presents the relations between a father and a son in his own class, he makes us feel more than the usual friction between age and youth; but he sets this against the presence of more than usually strong affection. He sees the companionship with humour; but his smile has a wry twist. He remembers with pain how the two can be close held by affection, but dragged apart by diverging ambitions. For the full realisation of what son may mean to father, or daughter to father, he takes us into homes where the work of the family binds them close. *The Antiquary* shows us a fisherman's passion over his drowned young comrade; and Davie Deans, whether with his more than helpful Jeanie or with Effie, the adored cast-away of his house, is a figure to set beside King Lear.

These studies of the elemental ties show Scott at his greatest; the picture of Mr. Saunders Fairford is a slight thing beside them. Yet it is a master's work, and even when the author laughs, and we laugh with him, the laughter is respectful and affectionate. Scott would not leave out the penurious frugality; but he was quick to



put in the touch which shows Mr. Fairford enraged that his son should be beholden to any man for his share of a reckoning. Yet in his association with his father, Scott learnt nothing that touched his imagination or called out the higher faculties of his mind. What he did learn<sup>4</sup> was a strict business habit that never left him through life.

But this employment of his youth had incidental consequences which not merely touched his imagination, but set fire to it. Mr. Scott had many Highland clients, not a few of whom were old Jacobites; for Mr. Saunders Fairford and his original, though Whigs, never cut themselves off from friendly relations of business with those who had been in trouble with the law of treason. Walter Scott met these men in his father's house, as clients and as guests, and heard with open ears the tales of 1715 and 1745 from actual actors in these rebellions. The "blawing bleezing stories," as Mr. Fairford calls them, "which the Highland gentleman love to tell of those troublous times which, if it were their will, they had better pretermit, as tending to shame rather than to honour" enchanted the original of Alan Fairford;<sup>1</sup> and it must have been a wonderful moment when he was sent in 1786 as his father's clerk to superintend the execution of a decree against some Maclarens who owed rent to Mr. Scott's client, Stewart of Invernahyle. There was sufficient prospect of forcible resistance to demand an escort: a sergeant and six men were sent, and Walter Scott, as he writes in the Introduction to *Rob Roy*, "first entered the romantic scenery of Loch Katrine, of which he may perhaps say that he has somewhat extended the reputation, riding in all the dignity of danger with a front and rear guard and loaded arms." The law apprentice was then fifteen years old; the sergeant, an old Highland soldier, was full of stories of Rob Roy, whose career as a levier of blackmail did not end till 1733.—Here, if you please, was food for the romancer.

<sup>1</sup> It is Darsie not Alan to whom the novel ascribes this propensity; and very probably William Clerk shared his friend's taste. But it is a safe guess that Scott attributed to Mr. Fairford a rebuke which Mr. Walter Scott had addressed to his own son.

Yet on this journey the charm of adventure was eclipsed by the revelation of new beauty. In the Introduction to the *Fair Maid of Perth*, Scott recalls how he saw from the Wicks of Baiglie the sudden view over the valley. It was the first excursion he had made on a pony of his own, and he felt "the glow of independence, mingled with that degree of anxiety, which the most conceited boy feels when he is first abandoned to his own undirected counsels." Yet the view suddenly took him aback.

"I recollect pulling up the reins, without meaning to do so and gazing on the scene before me as if I had been afraid it would shift like those in a theatre, before I could distinctly observe its different parts, or convince myself that what I saw was real. Since that hour, the recollection of that inimitable landscape has possessed the strongest influence over my mind, and retained its place as a memorable thing, while much that was influential on my own fortunes has fled from my recollection."

Later, when he was the full fledged advocate, he made many visits to the Highland homes of his college friends. A dozen houses were open to him, and all that a visitor, not Highland bred, could learn, he learnt among them.

But it was another matter when, at the age of twenty-one he began his "raids" into Liddesdale, crossing the passes on pony back, with Mr. Shortreed, the Sheriff-Substitute of Roxburghshire for his guide and companion. This was not a case of going to stay in the houses of his college friends; nor was it feasible for him or the magistrate to take up their quarters at an inn, for inn there was none in all Liddesdale. They had to be the guests of the countryside, sleeping where they got quarters, accepting what hospitality was offered. But Scott had come to his own, and his own received him. For seven years in succession, he and Shortreed renewed their "raids"; they stayed with shepherds, they stayed in the manses of ministers, but chiefly they were the guests of the homestead owners, the Dandie Dinmonts, masters of sheep and cattle, and great respecters, it seems, of men learned in the law. Shortreed's account to Lockhart tells of their first arrival in the house of some Elliot, where there was great to-do

at the first mention of housing an advocate. But after the good man had taken a look at his visitor through the chink of the hall door, and saw him with a pack of terriers gathered about him (for dogs of all kinds, and for that matter all four-footed things, fell in love at sight with Walter Scott), he whispered to Shortreed: "Weel, Robin, I say, deil hae me if I's be a bit feared for him now; he's just a cheeld like ourselves, I think."

"Eh me!" says Shortreed, "sic an endless fund o' humour and drollery as he then had wi' him! Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. Wherever we stopped, how brawlie he suited himsel' to everybody! He aye did as the lave did; never made himsel' the great man, or took ony airs in the company. I've seen him in a' moods in these jaunts, grave and gay, daft and serious, sober and drunk—(this however, even in our wildest rambles, was but rare)—but, drunk or sober, he was aye the gentleman. He looked excessively heavy and stupid when he was *fou*, but he was never out o' gude-humour. . . ."

. . . It was in that same season, I think, that Sir Walter got from Dr. Elliot the large old border war-horn, which ye may still see hanging in the armoury at Abbotsford. How *great* he was when he was made master o' *that*! I believe it had been found in Hermitage Castle—and one of the Doctor's servants had used it many a day as a grease-horn for his scythe, before they discovered its history. When cleaned out, it was never a hair the worse—the original chain, hoop, and mouth-piece of steel, were all entire, just as you now see them. Sir Walter carried it home all the way from Liddesdale to Jedburgh, slung about his neck like Johnny Gilpin's bottle, while I was intrusted with an ancient bridle-bit, which we had likewise picked up.

'The feint o' pride—na pride had he . . .  
A lang kail-gully hung down by his side,  
And a great meikle nowt-horn to rout on had he,'

and meikle and sair we routed on't, and 'hotched and blew wi' micht and main.' O, what pleasant days! And then a' the nonsense we had cost us naething. We never put hand in pocket for a week on end. Toll-bars there were none—and indeed I think our haill charges were a *fred* o' corn to our horses in the gamin' and comin' at Riccartoun mill."

Nowhere else in all Scotland were Scott's contacts quite so general; and out of these Liddesdale raids came the

Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, and out of the Minstrelsy grew, first, Scott's poetry, and then the Waverley Novels.

These stout, jolly, punch-drinking farmers, and the Sheriff-Substitute whom they called by his Christian name, were no doubt anything but mealy-mouthed in talk, or precise in their behaviour; and if their jokes were broad, there is plenty of evidence in the Waverley Novels that Scott was well used to that kind of humour. But one thing is very clear. Convivial as he was, he was a more than commonly clean-living young man; and he had the best protection which can come to young blood. He had fallen in love, as it would appear, before he was out of his teens, with a young woman whom he met first by accident, when he offered her his umbrella on the way home from church. Her mother proved to be an old friend of Mrs. Scott, and it grew into a custom that the two mothers and the son and daughter should meet thus every Sunday. But when Scott's father heard of a projected excursion to Montrose, where the property of this family lay, he guessed that his son had an eye to more than scenery, and he wrote privately to the lady's father, saying that he did not wish the acquaintance to go on without full consideration of the consequences. That gentleman however did not think it necessary to interfere, and Walter Scott was permitted to worship. There is no doubt that he began his professional life with the hope of success that might make marriage possible with the lady—who did not reject the idea.

All the story is shadowy as a dream, though the persons are definite enough. She was an only child; her father, Mr. John Belches, was a cadet of ancient Highland family, heir by inheritance to Sir John Belches Stuart of Fettercairn. Her mother, Lady Jane Stuart, was daughter of the Earl of Leven. On the face of things, the young woman was beyond the reach of an impecunious advocate. But she was intelligent, and intelligently brought up; her parents fetched James Mill, a raw but able student, to Edinburgh, where he acted as her tutor while keeping his

college course; and it appears that she shared Scott's inclination not only for reading verse but for writing it.

We know the end of the story. In January 1797 she married Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo, a contemporary and college comrade of Walter Scott, but of wealth and position to make him a suitable match for her. We know that in the autumn of 1796, Scott paid a visit to Invermory, which was then the lady's home, and there at last the *coup de grace* was given to his hopes. But it would seem that this was no sudden reversal. There were "three years of dreaming and two of awakening,"—which should date the beginning of his dreams to the year when he was admitted to the bar, or perhaps earlier.

He made no outcry at the time, though the first verses of his that have real distinction are the young man's protestation:

/

The violet in her green-wood bower,  
Where birchen boughs with hazels mingle,  
May boast itself the fairest flower  
In glen, or copse, or forest dingle.

Though fair her gems of azure hue,  
Beneath the dew-drop's weight reclining;  
I've seen an eye of lovelier hue,  
More sweet through wat'ry lustre shining.

The summer sun that dew shall dry,  
Ere yet the day be past its morrow;  
Nor longer in my false love's eye  
Remain'd the tear of parting sorrow.

They are excellent stanzas; yet there is in them no accent of strong passion; and it is no way surprising that nature provided the natural remedy for a healthy young man and that before the year of his lady's wedding was over, the writer of these verses had married too. His broken heart was, as he wrote years and years later, "handsomely pieced." But the cracks remained; and after more than thirty years the old wound could re-open with pangs that showed how deep it had been.

That was the time when troubles had come thick upon him. He was dashed from wealth to bankruptcy; his wife died; but when he went by chance to St. Andrews in June 1827 with a party of guests, he left them to climb St. Rule's Tower without him, and sat down by himself on a gravestone to recollect the first visit he had made to St. Andrews. "I remembered the name I then carved in Runic characters beside the Castle gate, and I asked why it should still agitate my heart. But my friends came down from the tower and the foolish idea was chased away."

It did not stay away. The lady whose name he had carved in 1793 had been under the turf herself since 1810; but three months later than this visit to St. Andrew's, there came, like a voice from the grave, a letter from her mother, Lady Jane Stuart, who had not met Scott since the visit to Invermory in 1796 and his final dismissal.

"Were I to lay open my heart," she wrote, "you would find how it has and ever shall be warm towards you. Not the mother who bore you has followed you more anxiously (though secretly) with her blessing than I. Age has tales to tell and sorrows to unfold."

She offered to send "as a secret and sacred treasure" a manuscript book that had belonged to her daughter in which were some verses by him—and some also by herself.

The outcome was that in Edinburgh he called on Lady Jane Stuart. "An affecting meeting," is all the Journal says. But next day comes this:

"I went to make another visit, and fairly softened myself, like an old fool, with recalling old stories, till I was fit for nothing but shedding tears and repeating verses for the whole night. This is sad work. The very grave gives up its dead, and time rolls back thirty years to add to my perplexities. I don't care. I begin to grow case-hardened, and, like a stag turning at bay, my naturally good temper grows fierce and dangerous. Yet what a romance to tell!—and told, I fear, it will one day be. And then my three years of dreaming, and my two years of wakening, will be chronicled, doubtless. But the dead will feel no pain."

It is no common passion that leaves such traces. An idea has gone abroad that Scott as a writer is superficial because he does not analyse the emotions which are connected with sex; and it is quite true that in his work he gives the go-by to the whole physical side of passion. But there never yet was physical longing which, by the mere memory of it after half a lifetime, could shake a man's whole nature to the foundations. What Scott depicts again and again in his novels, is the love of the clean young man for the clean young woman; a relation in which the purely physical side is always submerged by more abstract emotions—the desire for companionship, the desire to monopolise that companionship, the desire for an answering desire to be so monopolised; and with these goes the desire to protect, to serve, to worship. All these are with a young man much more insistent than the primitive hunger. Scott, for reasons that must be considered elsewhere, never succeeds in putting life into a love-story. But when he represents his young men urged into vehement and violent and often absurd actions by their passion, there is not the least doubt that he took such consequences to be the most natural things in the world. In the sense of proneness to great violence of emotion, he was a most passionate man. Hardy and combative and adventurous, he aimed at a stubbornness of silent endurance like that of the old Norse warriors, or of his own fighting men; but throughout life he was liable to bursts of hysterical sobbing under stress of emotion. There was a deal of the born soldier in him, and a deal of the trained man of business; but there was also the artist of genius, with sensibilities so fine that when fiercely wrought on, they could threaten reason itself. Colonel Mannering is a self-portrait, no doubt, of Walter Scott as a mature man of the world; but in the *Master of Ravenswood* there is probably a more real likeness to the young man whose passion beat itself fruitlessly against obstacles that hurt not his passion only but his pride. Lockhart quotes a letter from one of Scott's intimates to another, commenting on the announcement of the impending marriage. "This is not good news. I always dreaded there was some self deception

on the part of our romantic friend, and I now shudder at the violence of his most irritable and ungovernable mind."

Ungovernable or not, Scott's mind kept its trouble to itself; his heart was never worn on his sleeve, then or thereafter. If there is less reticence in the *Bride of Lammermoor* than elsewhere, that is easily explained, as will be seen later. But on the whole the slightness and even inadequacy with which he handles this branch of the novelist's theme cannot be attributed to lack of the capacity for passion. Rather the truth is that he had experienced too much to reopen willingly that old wound.

"What a story to tell," he wrote in his Journal, "and told I am afraid it will one day be." He need not have feared. It was only after his death that Lady Louisa Stuart, one of his truest friends, learnt even the name of the lady, who, as she wrote to Lady Montagu, had been "poor Sir Walter's first and perhaps only love." But beyond this name she had only this to add: "Sir Walter was heard to say that after her marriage he withdrew his waking thoughts from her, but that nothing harmful ever happened to him that he did not dream of her before it."

One can only guess how much this love episode counted for in his development; but, curiously enough, it seems at the outset to have stimulated that side of his nature which belonged to the active world, and to have diverted him from dreaming to a course of life in which dreams might at least conceivably be realised. Questioning his own heart, when misfortune had transformed his way of life that was so crowded with company, he wrote the answer: "Do you love this extreme loneliness? I can answer as conscientiously, *I do*. The love of solitude was with me a passion of early youth; when in my teens, I loved to fly from company to indulge in visions and airy castles of my own, the disposal of ideal wealth, and the exercise of imaginary power. This feeling prevailed even till I was eighteen, when love and ambition awakening with other passions, threw me more into society."

From eighteen to three and twenty he was governed by this influence: and at the end, I think he probably decided



that he would not humour melancholy. It was always in his nature to put constraint on his nature.

But this much is certain. Scott was crippled from childhood, and he deliberately mastered this handicap, and never allowed it to depress him. Byron, for whom success was made so easy by his birth, never could forget his 'clubfoot. Again, Scott began life with a disappointment in love which certainly cut much deeper than is common; and the cause of his defeat was of a nature to add to his resentment. He never forgot, but he never bore malice; he never allowed this, which has poisoned so many lives, to embitter his nature. When one counts him favoured by fortune, as indeed he was, it is only just to remember how much he surmounted that would have unfitted other men to enjoy fortune, or profit by it if it came.

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY MANHOOD AND FIRST LITERARY ADVENTURES

1795-1804

LITERATURE at no time filled the whole of Scott's life, and in the early years of his manhood it was only one of his amusements. Other concerns, therefore, properly come before it in an account of this period.

From the beginning of 1793, that is from his twenty-second year, Great Britain was at war with France, and with two brief intervals, continued at war till Waterloo was won in 1815. But until 1808 the war was almost entirely naval, so far as the offensive was concerned. Even in Wellington's great days, the struggle had no resemblance to that which we to-day all remember. Patriotic citizens at large were not called upon for foreign service. But there was a call, and an urgent one, for volunteers to defend the coasts. In the spring of 1794, an Edinburgh regiment was enrolled in which Thomas Scott, now a partner of his father, was enrolled as a grenadier. Walter Scott's lameness condemned him to fret, a mere looker-on; and already in 1794 he projected the plan of a volunteer light horse in which he could take a man's part. This, however, was delayed of accomplishment.

In the meantime, the facts of that period occasioned internal dissensions, which might well have approached revolution. The French uprising against a quite unconstitutional form of monarchy had many sympathisers in Great Britain. But the defeat of those who sought to restore the monarchy in 1792 was accompanied by

outbreaks of savagery in France, which turned feeling into other courses; and the Reformers in England became suspect. Jacobin was as bad a name then to give a man as Bolshevik in our days, and Scott, though his loyalty to the Hanoverians might be qualified, at least in retrospect, by a touch of sentiment for the Stuarts, was in any case passionately a Monarchist. He hated, on instinct, the breakers-up of things venerable and romantic by antiquity; and when, in addition, there was involved 'a loyalty to his country' in time of war, he held no measures with opposition. Ireland in those days, having been American in sympathy, was now inclined to be French and Republican; and at the theatre in Edinburgh Irish medical students demonstrated their sympathy by hooting the singing of "God Save the King." A number of young gentlemen from the Scottish bar decided to deal with these interruptions; they turned out with cudgels, and the first sounds of the National Anthem were the signal for a free fight, Scott was one of five subsequently bound over to the peace; no less than three broken heads were laid to his charge by the Democrats, and to the end of his life he never forgot the men who had been partakers in "the playhouse row." Thirty years later his interest was asked for one of them, looking for a preferment "To be sure," said Sir Walter (Lockhart testifies), "did he not sound the charge on Paddy? Shall I ever forget Donald's 'Sticks, by Got'?"

In 1796 there was a riot on the King's birthday, and Scott, having been sworn of the special constables, took part with his brother and Sir Alexander Wood in rescuing by a baton charge some leading citizens whom the mob pursued. But it was not till the next year that his martial ardour found a more regular outlet. In February 1797 the volunteer cavalry corps was started, and he was appointed quartermaster and secretary; indeed, at the outset he was to be paymaster as well; the accumulation of offices shows sufficiently how prominent he had been in organising the corps. The pay duties were transferred; but as quartermaster he attended drill daily in the spring and summer of 1797, at five o'clock in the morning; and

by the account of his lifelong friend James Skene, of Rubislaw, he was the leader in every kind of merriment.

It is worth noting that a cornet in the corps was Forbes of Pitsligo, who had just married the lady of Scott's early affections. Rivalry did not kill friendship—as Sir William Forbes was to prove in after years.

This volunteering enthusiasm was no mere flash in the pan; Scott worked at it with all his heart; indeed, a time came when he was accused with justice of neglecting other duties for it. But this was at a time when Napoleon's camp lay at Boulogne, and the danger of invasion was grave and constant. As events decided, his active service was never called for; but the experience thus acquired was to be of use in other ways, to the historian and to the novelist, in depicting a hundred scenes of war. Lockhart has printed a few extracts from Scott's private notebook of this period, which show the oddest jumble of notes on cavalry equipment, set among transcripts from old Scottish ballads from Elizabethan literature, from Anthony Wood, from Apuleius, from old trials and, repeatedly from German poetry and drama.

This last element had begun to bulk large in his mind since Mackenzie, author of the *Man of Feeling*, introduced the vogue to Edinburgh while Scott was still a college student. A band of these young men set out to learn the language; Clerk, as usual, was allied to Scott; but even more influential was the companionship of William Erskine, afterwards Lord Kinnedder—like Scott, an enthusiast for ballad literature, but, unlike Scott, a trained scholar.

It was not, however, till 1795 that report of a translation of Bürger's "Lenore" sent Scott on a hunt for the original, and, at a friend's suggestion, he set himself to make a version of his own. It was the work of a night, carried through in feverish excitement, and his friends praised the work. Nobody can be blind to the speed and rush which he achieves, even if we do not greatly value nowadays either the original or the rendering. The rather

absurd aspect of Scott's frame of mind, his fantastic passion for all the hobgoblinry, is illustrated by a story which comes from his friend, Sir Alexander Wood. To him Scott read his poem "in a very slow and solemn tone"; then, after some minutes' staring into the fire, burst out, "I wish to Heaven I could get a skull and two crossbones." A friendly surgeon soon provided him these accessories for a poet of the German school; and by October of 1796 he was venturing into print with a slim quarto in which "William and Helen" (his version of "Lenore,") figured with "The Wild Huntsman."

The publication had a vogue in Edinburgh among Scott's own friends, but no other success. He went on, however, in these years, translating dramas from the German into prose and occasionally into verse.

In this period he formed two connections of great importance in his life—of which perhaps the less important ended in marriage; still, let the marriage come first.

He set out on a first visit to the Lake district in the company of his elder brother, John, then a captain in the 73rd Regiment, and his friend, Adam Fergusson. After some wandering, they brought up at Gilsland, then a popular watering-place in Cumberland, close to the Roman Wall. Here the young men met a young lady out riding whose appearance charmed them; they hoped to meet her at a public ball that evening, and were not disappointed. There was keen competition, but Walter Scott succeeded in taking Miss Charlotte Margaret Carpenter in to supper; and within a very brief period he was writing to inform his mother that he had become engaged.

She was the daughter of Jean Charpentier, a royalist refugee from Lyons; and she was of Huguenot stock. Both her father and mother were dead, and her guardian was Lord Downshire, a friend of the family; her brother was richly provided for by Lord Downshire's interest in the East India Service, and was able to allow her some hundreds a year.

Scott, who never did things by halves, "was sair beside

himself about Miss Carpenter" when he met his friend, Shortreed, in Jedburgh that September. "We toasted her twenty times an hour," says Shortreed, "and sat together, he raving about her, until it was one in the morning."

She was a dark-haired, pretty young woman, with the archness that he assigns to many of his lovely ladies. Any one of the half-dozen letters from her which Lockhart prints gives the character: here is one:

"Dec. 10th,

"If I could but really believe that my letter gave you only half the pleasure you express, I should almost think, my dearest Scott, that I should get very fond of writing merely for the pleasure to *indulge* you—that is saying a great deal. I hope you are sensible of the compliment I pay you, and don't expect I shall *always* be so pretty behaved. You may depend on me, my dearest friend, for fixing as *early* a day as I possibly can; and if it happens to be not quite so soon as you wish, you must not be angry with me. It is very unlucky you are such a bad housekeeper—as I am no better. I shall try. I hope to have very soon the pleasure of seeing you, and to tell you how much I love you; but I wish the first fortnight was over. With all my love, and those sort of pretty things—adieu.

"CHARLOTTE."

P.S.—*Etudiez votre Français?* Remember you are to teach me Italian in return, but I shall be but a stupid scholar. *Aimez Charlotte.*"

The wedding was on Christmas Eve, 1797, in Carlisle Cathedral, where the lady who superintended Miss Carpenter's education had fixed her residence.

So began a marriage, unclouded for thirty years. Scott's income as an advocate was small, but within two years it was more than doubled by an appointment which he received; and with Mrs. Scott's income they must have had from the first what would be the equivalent of a thousand a year to-day. She liked enjoyment, and was no saver of money; but as years went on, money came in so much faster than could have been expected that no trouble came of this; and her taste for gaiety led Scott on to what greatly delighted him—constant theatre-going.

Children came to them, two boys and two girls; they were young together, they grew together into middle-age without discord. Scott was probably the easiest man of letters to be married to that ever lived, for he sat light by the verdict passed on his works, and he had no fretfulness. There was no envy in his composition. Moreover, he loved giving pleasure, and he saw to it, as his means grew ample, that his wife was not stinted.

She on her part never got in his way; she neither made nor marred his many friendships with men and with women. In the common sense of the word, she had no cause for jealousy. Yet she might easily have been jealous of his confidence. There is no trace that she was ever partaker of his inmost mind about his writings or his business.

No blame attaches to her for the course of outlay which led to his ruin. All that was fatal in it was due to his own tastes and ambitions; and if she never interfered to stop these, it is certain that, easygoing as he was, Scott was absolute master in his own house. With another woman, things might have gone otherwise; the woman whom he married was a pleasant and kind companion to him, as he to her; but they were never comrades.

She was so far a foreigner that her English always kept some trace of it. Hogg says that she said "dis" and "dat," and always spoke of him as "Mr. 'Ogg." She helped no doubt to give Scott more familiarity with the French language than he would otherwise have possessed, and though he never spoke it with ease, his letters are full of French phrases.

Their first home was in South Castle Street; but they soon moved to another, 39 North Castle Street, which Scott purchased, and which was his abode till 1826. A tablet marks it. The street had been built by the brothers Adam, and may pass for an example of their finest work, the whole block of houses being designed in one nobly balanced pattern.

Also, in the summer of 1798, Scott rented a country cottage at Lasswade (which English readers will note is pronounced Le-Swade) on the Esk, about six miles from Edinburgh. It was a tiny place; the best account of it is given in a reminiscence by Mr. Morritt, squire of Rokeby, who describes an excursion along the Esk with Scott soon after their first meeting in 1808. Scott led the way along a side road. Morritt writes:

"I suggested that we were losing the scenery of the Esk, and besides, Lord Dalkeith's palace, yet to see. 'Yes,' he said, 'and I have been bringing you where there is little enough to be seen—only that Scotch cottage—one by the roadside with a small garth—but, though not worth looking at, I could not pass it. It was our first country house when newly married, and many a contrivance we had to make it comfortable. I made a dining-table for it with my own hands. Look at these two miserable willow trees on either side the gate into the enclosure; they are tied together at the top to be an arch, and a cross made of two sticks over them is not yet decayed. To be sure, it is not much of a house to show a stranger; but I wanted to see it again myself, for I assure you that after I had constructed it, *mamma* (Mrs Scott) and I both of us thought it so fine, we turned out to see it by moonlight, and walked backwards from it to the cottage door, in admiration of our magnificence and its picturesque effect."

Small as the cottage was, it found space for much hospitality in the six years which followed; and the neighbourhood to Dalkeith, the Duke of Buccleuch's seat, had importance, for here for the first time Scott grew intimate with the head of the Scott name. Lord Melville, too, a great power in Scotland, was a neighbour and soon a friend.

William Clerk, of Pennycuik, closest of all his intimates, lived near by. Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*, then owned Auchendinny, and Lord Woodhouselee, another friend of the elder generation, was close at hand. Scott fixed all these names in verses of "The Gray Brother," written, as was his fashion, to give the pleasure of a minstrel's graceful compliment; and we read of "Esk's fair streams,"



and "Auchendinny's hazel glades and haunted Woodhouselee."

"Who knows not Melville's beechy grove,  
And Roslin's rocky glen,  
Dalkeith which all the virtues love,  
And classic Hawthornden?"

Altogether the young couple started life under most pleasant auspices; and Scott's friends in all quarters liked his wife. If she had been a stronger character, if she had held his imagination, his friends might perhaps have counted for less in his life; but certainly they counted for as much almost after marriage as before it.

Far greater influence was exercised over his life by the man who soon became his business associate. James Ballantyne was the son of a small tradesman at Kelso. He and Scott first met there in the Grammar School, which Scott was attending intermittently before he entered Edinburgh College. Storytelling was the bond, for Ballantyne was an eager listener, and they walked together for hours by the banks of the Tweed, while the stories poured out inexhaustibly.

Ballantyne was then apprenticed to a solicitor at Kelso, and the two did not meet for three or four years, when the Kelso apprentice came up to Edinburgh for a winter's study, and met his friend at the Teviotdale Club, where Walter Scott was a leading figure.

By 1795 Ballantyne had set up as a solicitor in Kelso; but next year, finding no business, he accepted a proposal made to him that he should bring out a local newspaper in the Tory interest. On his way back from Glasgow, where he had been buying type, he found himself a fellow-passenger with Scott for the forty mile drive by mailcoach to Kelso. The old friendship was renewed; and as Scott was a frequent guest of his uncle in Kelso, opportunities to maintain it were plentiful. Ballantyne had from the first a real love for literature; and he became one of its

good servants, as the intelligent director of a printing press.

For the first years of Scott's married life one must think of him as a young advocate amusing himself in the society of people who cared for poetry and took an interest in his experiments that way. Impetus was given by the arrival of a live celebrity from London—M. G. Lewis, Member of Parliament for Hindon, but generally known as "Monk" Lewis, because of his most successful novel *The Monk*. Long after, Scott told Allan Cunningham that "he thought he never felt such elation as when 'The Monk' invited him for the first time to dine with him at his hotel." The compliment was all the more intoxicating because Lewis enrolled his guest as a contributor to the *Tales of Wonder*, which he was then collecting; and Scott's first original ballads were written with this destination, and carry on them the stamp of the association. Later, when Scott had become famous, the young Byron, seeking to disparage him, fixed on those elements in his work which recalled the demand for a skull and crossbones.

"Oh wonder-working Lewis! monk, or bard,  
 Who fain wouldst make Parnassus a churchyard!  
 All hail, M.P., from whose infernal brain  
 Thin sheeted phantoms glide, a grisly train,  
 At whose command 'grim women' throng in crowds  
 And kings of fire, of water, and of clouds,  
 With 'small grey men,' 'wildjägers' and what-  
     not,  
 To crown with honour thee and Walter Scott."

Moore's note in his edition of Byron's works is worth quoting, for it gives a picture of the time when Moore himself as well as Scott was just emerging:

"Matthew Gregory Lewis, mainly in consequence of the clever use he made of his knowledge of the German language, then a rare accomplishment, attracted much notice in the literary world at an early period of his life. His *Tales of Terror*, *The Drama of the Castle Spectre*, . . . but above all the libidinous and impious novel of *The Monk*, invested the name of Lewis with

an extraordinary degree of celebrity during the first period which intervened between the obscurity of Cowper and the full display of Sir Walter Scott's talents in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*—a period which is sufficiently characterised by the fact that Hayley then passed for a poet. Next to that solemn coxcomb, Lewis was for several years the fashionable versifier of his time."

None the less, Lewis should not be denied the credit at least of stimulating Scott's efforts, though his example, to some degree, misdirected them.

At all events, Lewis interested himself to secure publication by a London bookseller of Scott's version of Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen*; and it appeared in February 1799. Another translation or adaptation from the German was *The House of Aspen*, written with some thought of stage performance; it is said that on Lewis's recommendation Kemble actually put it into rehearsal. It was published thirty years later, when all sweepings of Scott's bottom drawer had a value, but has no importance.

At the same time the translator began to break ground of his own. From this period, about his twenty-eighth year, date the romantic ballads of "Glenfinlas," the "Eve of St. John," and "The Gray Brother." It is only a step forward from these to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*; and already Scott shows in them to the full one of his most characteristic tendencies and accomplishments, weaving the names of places that he loved as threads of colour into the fabric of his verse.

He began, it is worth noting, with a Highland subject, in "Glenfinlas." From the first, he was more struck by the picturesque possibilities of Highland scenery and life than by those which the more familiar Lowland country and its people offered him. Tartan, pibroch and claymore seemed fitter for the type of narrative, blending natural description with supernatural machinery, which he sought to accomplish. He had yet to learn where his strength lay.

The "Eve of St. John," second of these ballads, is written about Smailholme Tower; there is a pleasant story that

the poet went to its owner, his kinsman, Scott of Harden, with a tale of dilapidation, and urgent requests that the tower should be preserved, and that he was met with the answer that a ballad must be the ransom. At all events, Scott first attempted here what he calls "a Border tale." Yet no man should have known better how little this story of a ghostly visit resembles the full-blooded tales of actual happenings, raids, forays, and rescues, strung into rough verse, which give to the Border literature its Homeric character.

All these poems were written for pastime, though all were intended to appear in Lewis's *Tales of Wonder*—where actually they first saw the light. But at the end of 1799, Scott, having occasion to see Ballantyne in Kelso, showed him some of the pieces—with which the printer was delighted. Before leaving, Scott suggested that the newspaper proprietor should try to get some work from booksellers, to keep his types busy; and so came about the proposal that a few copies of the ballads should be printed, and shown as a sample pamphlet. This was done, and the printer's work pleased Scott who said:

"I have been for years collecting old Border ballads, and I think I could put together such a selection from them as might make a neat little volume, to sell for four or five shillings. I will talk to some of the booksellers about it when I get to Edinburgh, and if the thing goes on you shall be the printer."

So originated *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*—which no doubt Scott would have edited in any case. But so originated, in Scott's desire to serve a friend, the connection between a writer with undreamt-of resources and a speculative printer.

However, we have first to consider the making of a poet, and it is important to understand exactly this step in the process.

The project of publishing Border Ballads began perhaps with a desire to serve James Ballantyne, but the particular origin was an accident. The idea must have been always

dimly present in Scott's mind, for he had been collecting Border Ballads from childhood. But when he definitely undertook the task, nothing more was contemplated than an occupation for the advocate's spare time. Not the wildest visionary, and Scott was anything but a visionary, could have contemplated achieving commercial success in literature by a publication mainly of local antiquarian interest. So far as he concerned himself about his future, he looked to his own profession for prosperity.

His advocacy was not having any marked success; the fees which he earned were steadily, though slowly, on the increase, but they never amounted to much over £200 in a year. At the end of 1799, Mr. Plummer, Sheriff deputy of Selkirkshire, died. He had been an antiquary and a friend whom Scott consulted freely over Border traditions; the office was practically that of stipendiary magistrate for Ettrick Forest, the very centre of all Scott's researches into Border lore. And since the Duke of Buccleuch owned nearly the whole shire, it was natural that he should have a voice in choosing the Sheriff. Moreover, it was a Government appointment, and Scotch patronage was regulated by David Dundas (Lord Melville). Two of the Duke's sons, and a son and two nephews of Lord Melville's, had been closely associated with Walter Scott in the Yeomanry Corps; they appreciated his service there, and also, beyond doubt, liked him for his company. Scott was lucky through all his life; but the best way to be lucky is to be liked, if respect goes with the liking; and that also never failed him. The upshot was that at twenty-nine he found himself appointed Sheriff, with three hundred a year of fixed salary, and full freedom to continue his practice at the bar.

It should be added that, in 1799 Mr. Walter Scott died, leaving indeed less fortune than was anticipated, but enough to make an appreciable addition to his son's means in the division of his property.

This accession came with the first addition to Scott's responsibility; his eldest daughter, Sophia, was born (like all his children,) in the house in North Castle Street

on October 24, 1799. While his family was growing, his means grew in proportion.

In 1802, after the first two volumes of the *Minstrelsy* had come out, Miss Anna Seward wrote to ask that her name might be added to the list of subscribers. Scott wrote to say that the Ballads were not published by subscription, but asked leave to send her a copy, adding :

"Providence having, I suppose, foreseen that my literary qualifications, like those of many more distinguished persons, might not, *par hazard*, support me exactly as I would like, allotted me a small patrimony, which, joined to my professional income, and my appointments in the characteristic office of Sheriff of Ettrick Forest, serves to render my literary pursuits more a matter of amusement than an object of emolument."

These literary pursuits were not in the first instance those of a poet, yet were, though he did not guess it, apprenticeship to original composition. The five years leading up to the publication of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* were years whose literary effort was devoted in the main to the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. The *Lay* itself was first undertaken as part of this project, which sought to bring together not only the old ballads, but modern imitations of them. The secondary purpose so far intruded upon the other that Scott soon found himself writing a poem whose mere length debarred it from inclusion; and, as the *Lay* grew, he must have been aware that he was producing something quite other than an imitation—work in a new literary kind.

Yet he did not even attempt this larger venture until he had largely achieved his primary object, thus described in the words of his Introduction to the *Minstrelsy*:

"By such efforts, feeble as they are, I may contribute somewhat to the history of my native country; the peculiar features of whose manners and character are daily melting and dissolving into those of her sister and ally. And, trivial as may appear such an offering to the Manes of a kingdom, once proud and independent, I hang it upon her altar with a mixture of feelings, which I shall not attempt to describe."

The impulse which set Scott to literature was the impulse of a patriotic historian; and throughout his life, historian he remained. The poems which he unearthed or revived were to him not only illustrations of the past ages, examples of what Scotland produced in her rough art; they were also the material for Chronicles. In these researches he was handling the stuff from which his imagination later on created a veritable pageant of history. But also, he was in a school of style—learning instinctively the methods which were most congenial to him for narrative, whether in verse or in prose.

It was the making of a poet; yet how unlike the making of those other poets, his poet contemporaries. For one thing, it came at a much later stage in his life: the historic Muse is not served by boy-worshippers. Of the company in which we instinctively place him, Scott was actually older than any except Wordsworth—born in 1770, and therefore a year senior to Scott. Coleridge, born in 1772, was younger than both; Southey two years younger still; Moore, still of the same decade, was eight years Scott's junior. The others whom we are apt to think of as belonging to the same group, were definitely of a younger generation. Byron was seventeen years younger than Scott; when he grew up, Scott had become lord of the ascendant, and powerfully influenced this even more successful rival. Keats and Shelley, younger still, never entered Scott's horizon.

But of his true contemporaries, who came to manhood abreast of him, each one—even Moore—had already made his mark in poetry, while Scott was known only to a limited circle in Edinburgh as a student of antiquities with a pleasant knack for verse. All these contemporaries, with one exception, became his close and valued friends. The exception was Coleridge, too misty a metaphysician to appeal greatly to the descendant of moss-troopers. Yet it was only Coleridge who left his mark on Scott's work; for by 1803, Coleridge's fame had spread so far among real students of literature that Scott in Edinburgh heard "Christabel" recited, and caught at the example of its

metre, though the poem had not yet been published anywhere.

*Lyrical Ballads*, the joint work of Wordsworth and Coleridge, which marked the decisive break-away of poetry from the models accepted during the eighteenth century, had appeared five years earlier—in 1798. Scott was then simply a young Scottish advocate, newly and pleasantly married, who thought himself highly privileged to have a hand in filling up Lewis's volume of the *Tales of Wonder*.

In point of mere popularity, the late comer was to outstrip by far these pioneers. Even that is not a complete statement. Moore, his contemporary, considered, as has been shown by the extract already quoted, that after the "obscuration of Cowper" poetry received its first new and vital impulse from the work of Scott—though when the nineteenth century opened Scott's chief occupation in poetry was the collecting and editing of ballads that were remembered, if at all, only among those who could hardly be called literate.

But they were the true nourishment for him; above all, their rude downright fidelity to fact was calculated to dispel all the mists of German demonology.

The literary research on which Scott embarked for the *Minstrelsy* brought him troops of friends. Richard Heber was a wealthy young English squire with a passion for book-collecting, who in course of time became member for the University of Oxford, sat silent in Parliament for many years, and died a bachelor, leaving eight houses choked from ground-floor to garret with volumes. Scott says somewhere that Heber's cellar was worthy of his library, and Heber no doubt rejoiced to find in the far north a boon companion whose passion for print was omnivorous as his own. Through him Scott first entered upon friendship, by exchange of letters, with George Ellis, a much older man—Canning's contemporary and friend, one of the coadjutors in the "Rolliad" and in the "Anti-Jacobin." Ellis, who was not only a witty pasquinader but a true man of letters, had already published his *Specimens of*



*Ancient English Poetry* and was at work on his *Specimens of Ancient English Romance*. The correspondence began about a version of *Sir Tristram*, which existed in a Scotch manuscript, and was to have been included in the *Border Minstrelsy*. But the Arthurian hero was not the sole interest of this poem; for Scott firmly believed that this romance was the work of no less a person than Thomas the Rhymer, laird of Ercildoune (now corrupted into Earlston) in Lauderdale, between Tweed and Leader Water. This Thomas was a historic personage of the thirteenth century; yet strong tradition persisted that he had traffic with unseen powers. An authentic poem by Sir Tristram himself would scarcely have been a greater prize to these Border antiquaries than a genuine rhyme by the Rhymer; and if Scott had been willing to doubt its genuineness, he had an ally who would not have let him.

John Leyden was one of these prodigies that occur without cause traceable: the son of a very poor farmer in Selkirkshire, he scarcely got any schooling, yet somehow managed to come to Edinburgh College knowing five or six tongues; and "before his nineteenth year he had" (to quote Lockhart) "confounded the doctors of Edinburgh by the portentous mass of his acquisitions in every department of learning." Lockhart says that it was Heber who discovered the strange figure in the little obscure bookshop, where Archibald Constable then had the beginnings of a business that grew to be famous; but Leyden's friends resented Lockhart's presentment of Leyden as a caricature. Scott's memoirs, however, make it plain that Leyden as a student was poor and ill-clad to a degree rare even among Scottish students; but also that no one laughed at the ragged scholar twice; the farmer's son was sturdy, fierce and combative. It is, however, true that when Scott began to work on his collection, Leyden was already established in the society of Edinburgh, then admirably eager to discover talent, and careless how talent happened to be clothed. Scott himself had so much of this feeling that he did not hesitate to picture his friend as uncouth, in private letters which were only published after both

men had gone. But at the time, while both were in their own country, he made public with every circumstance of acknowledgment his debt to this uncouth student. The debt was great: for the farmer's son, starved for books, had caught at whatever matter was within reach, and the ballads which Scott even as a boy loved were the main food of Leyden's childish imagination. It was Leyden who thrust aside contemptuously Ballantyne's suggestion that one volume would suffice for the work. "Dash it, does Mr. Scott mean another thin thing like *Goetz of Berlichingen*?—I have more than that in my head myself; we shall turn out three or four such volumes at least." It is only right to add that Scott, even when left to himself, seldom if ever completed any work of historic research within the space originally contemplated; anyhow, they went to work together, and in a kindred spirit. Scott has written in his Essay on the Life of Leyden:

"In this labour Leyden was equally interested by friendship for the editor, and by his own patriotic zeal for the honour of the Scottish borders; and both may be judged of from the following circumstance. An interesting fragment had been obtained of an ancient historical ballad; but the remainder, to the great disturbance of the editor and his coadjutor, was not to be recovered. Two days afterwards, while the editor was sitting with some company after dinner, a sound was heard at a distance like that of the whistling of a tempest through the torn rigging of the vessel which scuds before it. The sounds increased as they approached more near; and Leyden (to the great astonishment of such of the guests as did not know him) burst into the room, chanting the desiderated ballad with the most enthusiastic gesture, and all the energy of what he used to call the *saw-tones* of his voice. It turned out that he had walked between forty and fifty miles and back again, for the sole purpose of visiting an old person who possessed this precious remnant of antiquity."

The saga of these years would not be complete without the encounter between this eccentric and another original—Joseph Ritson, the learned critic who fell terribly upon Bishop Percy, accusing that divine of having sophisticated the ancient texts in his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*.

Scott managed to be on good terms by correspondence with Ritson, and even received unstinted commendation from him when the first two volumes of the *Minstrelsy* appeared. But thereafter, Ritson must come to Edinburgh; and he was, amongst other forms of crankiness, a furious vegetarian. Scott with Erskine and others had gone for a walk from Lasswade to give the dogs a run—(for already the household harboured at least one deerhound, and one Liddesdale terrier) and when they returned, they expected to find Ritson. But Mrs. Scott was alone with Leyden. “The learned cabbage eater,” as Scott called him, had indeed arrived for luncheon, and Mrs. Scott, forgetting his taboos, offered him roast beef; this provoked such an outburst of uncivil language that Leyden had told him to be silent “or he would thraw his neck,” and Ritson prudently retired.

The two antagonists met again in London, and it is reported that on this occasion Leyden sent for a raw steak and consumed the reeking gobbets before Ritson’s eyes. Whether this be true or no, in 1803 Leyden was indeed in London with introductions from Scott to Ellis, and on his way to a post in the East India Company’s service which Ellis, at Scott’s request, had been active in procuring for him. So passed out of Scott’s life this genius who within a few years was the envy of Orientalists for his learning, and who got his death in the expedition to Java, launched by Stamford Raffles. Leyden joined it as a volunteer, was the first man to leap ashore, and next day plunged into the library, where the Dutch were reported to have left a store of manuscripts. The place was cold and damp; his zeal took no account of such trifles; and within two days “a distant and a deadly shore held Leyden’s cold remains.”

But the tale of the friendships of these years is not half told. Scott in his own rambles through the Forest reached Blackhouse farm, in the Vale of Yarrow, beyond St. Mary’s Lake. It was held by the Laidlaws, and William Laidlaw, a very young man, had become its tenant on his father’s death. He was not only a lover but a maker of

Scottish poetry. Scott and he were drawn together by mutual affection; and later, as must be told in due time, he became part of Scott's home circle at Abbotsford. In this early period, Laidlaw was one of the helpers who brought much matter to the *Minstrelsy*; but above all, he made Scott acquainted with James Hogg, who had for long years been shepherd to Laidlaw's father, and now served another farmer near by.

The Ettrick Shepherd, whose gift was at all events comparable to that of Scott himself, had already written a good deal, though his verse was only known to the ewe milkers and shepherd lads. We need no divination to re-create the first encounter between these two poets, for the tale is on record. Hogg was then twenty-eight, a year younger than Scott. He had been in service since he was a ragged boy of seven, and his last touch of schooling ceased when he was eight. At eighteen he had almost forgotten how to use a pen, though always a reader; but he had been making verses since he was twenty—composing the words in his head. As early as 1802—the year in which he first met Scott—he had made his first venture in publication; for, in his duty as a shepherd, he went into Edinburgh with a flock of sheep for sale; there failing to dispose of all at once, he put the rest into a paddock till the market day, and, with time to kill, thought suddenly that he would write out some of his poems and have them printed.

"I wrote as many as I could during my short stay; gave them to a man to print at my expense, and having sold off my sheep, I returned into the Forest and saw no more of my poems until I received word that there were one thousand copies of them thrown off. I knew no more about publishing than the map in the moon, and the only motive that influenced me was the gratification of my vanity by seeing my works in print."

That last sentence is so truthful that one is tempted to believe the rest of this surprising story, told thus by Hogg in the preface to his first serious publication, *The Mountain Bard*.

At all events, this early venture had appeared before Hogg's first meeting with Scott, of which a description is given in the *Domestic Manners and Private Life of Sir Walter Scott*.<sup>1</sup>

"The first time I ever saw Sir Walter was one fine day in the summer of 1801." (This should evidently be 1802.) "I was busily engaged working in the field at Ettrick House when old Wat Shiel came posting over the water to me and told me that I boud to gang away down to the Ramsey-Cleuch as fast as my feet could carry me, for there were some gentlemen there who wanted to see me directly.

'Wha can be at the Ramsey Cleuch that want to see me, Wat?'

'I couldna say, for it wasna me they spake to i' the byganging', but I'm thinking it's the Shirra an' some o' his gang.'

I was rejoiced to hear this, for I had seen the first volumes of the *Minstrelsy of the Border*, and had copied a number of ballads from my mother's recital, or chaunt rather, and sent them to the editor preparatory to the publication of the second volume. I accordingly flung down my hoe and hasted away home to put on my Sunday clothes, but before reaching I met the Shirra and Mr. William Laidlaw coming to visit me. They alighted and remained in our cottage perhaps nearly two hours, and we were friends on the very first exchange of sentiments. It could not be otherwise, for Scott had no duplicity about him. He always said as he thought. My mother chanted the ballad of 'Old Martlan' to him, with which he was highly delighted, and asked her if she thought it ever had been in print? And her answer was, 'O, na, na, sir, it never was printed in the world, for my brothers and me learned it and many mae frae auld Andrew Moor, and he learned it frae auld Baby Mettlin wha was housekeeper to the first laird o' Tushilaw. She was said to have been another nor a gude ane, an' there are many queer stories about hersel', but o! she had been a grand singer o' auld songs and ballads.'

'The first laird o' Tushielaw, Margaret,' said he, 'then that must be a very old story indeed.'

'Aye, it is that, sir.—It is an auld story. But mair nor that, excepting George Warton and James Stuart, there war never ane o' my songs prentit till ye prentit them yoursel' and ye hae spoilt them awthegither. They were made for singin' and no

<sup>1</sup> Hogg—to Lockhart's indignation—brought out this little volume in 1838 before the official *Memoir* appeared. There was much in it, and especially in the preface, (apparently not of Hogg's writing) that was calculated to annoy Scott's intimates; but who that reads even a few extracts from its vivid and artless narrative will not be thankful that it was written?

for reading; but ye hae broken the charm now, an' they'll never be sung mair. An' the worst thing of a', they're nouthier richt spelled nor richt setten down.'

'Tak ye that, Mr. Scott,' said Laidlaw.

Scott answered with a hearty laugh, on which my mother gave him a hearty rap on the knee with her open hand, and said, 'Ye'll find, however, that it is a' true that I'm tellin' ye.' My mother has been too true a prophetess, for from that day to this these songs which won the amusement of every winter evening have never been sung more.

We were all to dine at Ramsey-Cleuch with the Messrs. Bryden, but Scott and Laidlaw went away to look at some monuments in Ettrick Churchyard, and I was to follow. On going into the stack-yard at Ramsey Cleuch I met with Mr. Scott's groom, a greater original than his master, at whom I asked if the Shirra was come.

'Ow ay, lad, the Shirra's come,' said he. 'Are ye the chap that mak's the auld ballads and sings them sae weel?'

I said I fancied I was he that he meant.

'Ay then, lad, gang your ways into the house and speir for the Shirra. They'll let ye see where he ~~as~~, and he'll be very glad to see ye, that I'll assure ye o'.'

Then comes the tale of an expedition to seek after relics of antiquity on the farms of Buccleuch and Mount Comyn, the original possession of the Scotts—and of the Shirra's excitement over the discovery in an old churchyard of a small iron pot encrusted with rust. Scott's eyes brightened (as might those of Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck) and "he swore it was part of an ancient consecrated helmet." Laidlaw however "fell to picking and scratching with great patience" till the thing was disclosed for an "auld tarpot that some of the farmers hae been buisting their sheep out o'."

And so they laughed and rode home.

"He was at that time a capital horseman and was riding on a terribly high-spirited grey nag, which had the perilous fancy of leaping every drain, rivulet, and ditch that came in our way. The consequence was that he was everlastingly bogging himself, whule sometimes the rider kept his seat in spite of the animal's plunging, and at other times he was obliged to extricate himself as best he could. I said to him, 'Mr. Scott, that's the maddest deil o' a beast. Can you no gar him

tak' a wee mair time? He's just out o' ae lair intil another wi' ye.'

"We visited the old castles of Tushielaw and Thirlstane, dined and spent the afternoon and night with Mr. Brydon of Crosslee. Sir Walter was all the time in the highest good humour, and seemed to enjoy the range of mountain solitude which we traversed exceedingly. Indeed, I never saw him otherwise in the fields. On the rugged mountains, and even toiling in the Tweed to the waist, I have seen his glee surpass that of all other men."

The book goes on to give an instance of this flow of spirits. Scott, with Mr. Skene of Rubislaw and Hogg, was out one night in January, about midnight, leistering kippers (that is spearing salmon, after the fashion described in *Guy Mannering*). A burning peat is part of the equipment, carried to kindle the torches; but behold, their peat was gone dead, and they had to send an attendant back for another. To pass the time, Scott asked Hogg to sing them his ballad of "Gilman's Cleuch." Hogg began, but after a few stanzas broke down; whereupon Scott, who had only heard it once recited, went right through the whole eighty-eight stanzas from memory. By that time they could get to work.

"Rob Fletcher came at last, and old Mr. Laidlaw of the Peel with him, carrying a lantern, and into the river we plunged in a frail boat which had suffered some deadly damage. We had a fine blazing light, and the salmon began to appear in plenty, 'turning up sides like swine.' But woe be to us, our boat began instantly to manifest a disposition to sink, and in a few minutes we reached Gloddie's Weal, the deepest pool in all that part of Tweed.

"When Scott saw the terror that his neighbour old Peel was in, he laughed till the tears blinded his eyes. Always the more mischief the better sport for him. 'For God's sake push her to the side,' roared Peel. 'Oh, she goes fine,' said Scott.

'An 'gin the boat was bottomless,  
An' seven miles to row.'

"During the very time he was reciting these lines, down went the boat to the bottom, plunging us all into Tweed, over head

and ears. It was no sport to me, for I had no change of raiment at Ashestiel, but that was a glorious night for Scott, and the next day was no worse."

These extracts give a picture of the conditions in which Scott conducted his search for the remnants of Border poetry, and of the associates who helped him. But for his secondary purpose, to mingle new work of kindred inspiration with his collection of the old, he got his stimulus from quite different persons and surroundings.

Scott was blamed by some of his contemporaries—and Hogg is their best spokesman—for "a too strong leaning to the old aristocracy of his country."

"This devotion for titled rank was prodigious and in such an illustrious character altogether out of place. It amounted almost to adoration."

Hogg proceeds to give instances:

"Although he, of course, acknowledged Buccleuch as the head and chief of the whole clan of Scott, yet he always acknowledged Harden as his immediate chieftain and head of the powerful and numerous sept of that name, and Sir Walter was wont often to relate how he and his father before him and his grandfather before that, always kept their Christmas with Harden in acknowledgment of their vassalage. This he used to tell with a degree of exultation which I always thought must have been astounding to everyone who heard it, as if his illustrious name did not throw a blaze of glory on the house of Harden a hundred times more than that race of old border barbarians, however brave, could throw over him.

"He was likewise descended from the chiefs of Haliburton and Rutherford, on the maternal side, and to the circumstance of his descent from these three houses he adverted so often, mingling their arms in his escutcheon that to me, alas, who to this day could never be brought to discover any distinction in rank, save what was constituted by talents or moral worth, it appeared perfectly ludicrous, thinking, as no man could help thinking, of the halo which his genius shed over those families, while he only valued himself as a descendant of theirs."

It may have been a foible in Sir Walter Scott to have these traditional feelings; but it is a commoner foible in



literary men to overrate the "halo" which their genius sheds over their families and surroundings. Certainly, too, it is blameable, to set too little store by intellectual distinction; but the only genius among his contemporaries that Scott ever belittled was that of Walter Scott. It is true, however, that he did not put the Ettrick Shepherd quite so high as the shepherd put himself. But whoever looks at the wonderful portrait of Hogg preserved in Mr. Blackwood's offices, will see a story told. There, muffled in his plaid, the man looks at us from under furry eyebrows, with eyes quick and lively as a fox's; the glance is intensely shrewd and appraising, yet over the countenance there is a kind of blur of puzzlement, as if the creature who thus looked out at the world was not sure of the world's intentions to him. It is the face of one who must be humoured, petted or induced; not of a man that can be reasoned with. The truth is that Hogg was what country-people call "ignorant"; he was a peasant of extraordinary gifts, yet lacking what is so common among the peasantry of his race, a sense of dignity and native breeding. Hogg's vanity upset him and unbalanced his judgment, and nothing could illustrate this better than the last story which he tells to illustrate Scott's "adoration" of the aristocracy.

There was a great festival at Bowhill, the Duke of Buccleuch's house on Ettrick, and two tables were set in the dining-room, one lengthwise and one across. At the former "all the ladies were seated, mixed alternately with gentlemen, and at this table all were noble. . . . But I," says Hogg, "having had some chat with the ladies, and being always rather a flattered pet with them imagined they could not possibly live without me, and placed myself among them."

Scott, who was at the head of the cross table, seeing the situation, got up at once and asked the Duke if, as a particular favour, he would let Hogg come to his party, for they could not do without him; for, he said,

"If ye reave the Hoggs o' Fauldshope  
Ye harry Harden's gear."

And so down Hogg was set by the man on Scott's right hand, whom Hogg took throughout dinner for an English clergyman, but who was Scott of Harden, under whose family on the lands of Fauldshope, "my forefathers had been vassals," says Hogg—and goes on to deplore the chance he lost to have talked to Harden "about old matters."

Surely no man could have shown more tact and geniality than Scott there; and to do Hogg justice, Hogg knew it; yet he is not appeased because there came this new example of Scott's foible.

"When the dinner came to be served, Sir Walter refused to let a dish be set on our table which hadn't first been presented to the Duke and the nobility. 'No, no,' said he, 'this is literally a meeting of the clan and its adherents, and we shall have our dinner in the feudal style, it may be but for once in our lives.'"

It does not seem to us hard to forgive the clan's minstrel for entering so heartily into the spirit of the feast—or the antiquarian for ensuring that every detail of the old ritual should be revived.—Other critics, however, may condemn the sequel, which Hogg applauds. Sir Walter sat out the whole evening of toasts, and saw many a Scott ~~and many~~ an Elliott "fall with terrible thuds on the floor"; and when as a final homage, the clan were called on to drink the king's health for a second time, and to sing "God Save the King" standing on their chairs, Sir Walter was still of the party:

"Down we went, one after another," says Hogg. "I fell off and took a prodigious run to one corner of the room, against which I fell, which created great merriment. There were not above six stood the test, out of from thirty to forty. Sir Walter did, and he took off all the latter bumpers to the brim. He had good head more ways than one."

"A more sociable companion never was born," is Hogg's verdict; but he testifies to Scott's habitual moderation. It is, however, perfectly true that Scott, who could carouse on due occasion, and who was entirely at home and at his

ease in any farmhouse or cottage, liked to be in the historic houses which appealed to his imagination, and liked the company of cultivated and highbred men and women. Even before he began to be famous, such company sought him out. Thus in 1799, just before the project of the *Minstrelsy* took shape, he was invited to Bothwell Castle, the seat of Lord Douglas—a name for a minstrel to conjure with. He was welcomed there because Frances, Lady Douglas, was sister to Buccleuch, and had met the young advocate at Dalkeith, her nephew's house. So began a friendship that lasted long—yet not so long as that which Scott formed at Bothwell Castle with Lady Douglas's close ally, the Lady Louisa Stuart, daughter of Bute, George III's Minister. Lady Louisa, who was over forty when Scott met her, and who survived him by twenty years, is known to us now as one of the wittiest letter-writers of her time. Scott himself wrote of her: "Lady Louisa unites what are rarely found together—a perfect tact such as few even in the higher classes attain, with an uncommon portion of that rare quality which is called genius." Her mind was stored with history—and more especially, of her grandfather the great Duke of Argyll; and encouragement from a woman of such ability and such experience of the world was of no small value to a young man. Scott began there, to please himself and them, a ballad of Bothwell Castle. It was never finished; what he owed to Lady Douglas and more specially to Lady Louisa Stuart, came to be shown in other and incomparably greater work. But his first immediate instinct was the minstrel's: to repay high courtesy by a minstrel's praise of place and race and name, celebrating the associations, beautiful or tragic, that clung about "Bothwell's lovely braes and Blantyre's bowers of green."

Another house famous in Scottish history opened to him when he became a guest at Hamilton Palace in Lanarkshire. Here, visiting the dismantled castle which had been the stronghold of the Hamilton name, and the forest of immense oaks where the wild white cattle of Scotland had long been preserved, he conceived the idea

of describing these scenes in a ballad that should recount a Hamilton's bold deed—the slaying of Queen Mary's supplanter, the Regent Murray. "Cadyow Castle" was completed, though not in time for the two first volumes of the *Minstrelsy*: it appeared in the third.

But in 1802, after the first two volumes had reached a second edition, Scott wrote to Ellis, that the third would include not only "Cadyow Castle" but "a long poem of my own. It will be a kind of romance of Border chivalry, in a light-horseman sort of stanza."

This was nothing less than the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Again the impetus to song had been given by a noble lady. The Countess of Dalkeith bestowed her beauty and her bounty so graciously that her at least Scott may be said to have regarded with adoration. She asked him for a ballad on the legend of Gilpin Horner, an elvish creature who was found by shepherds crying "*Tint, tint!*" (Lost, lost!) It was brought home to live on a farm till one day a voice was heard calling, "Gilpin Horner" and with a cry again of "*Tint, tint!*" the goblin vanished. How the story grew, and what came from it, must be considered in another chapter; by 1803 all thought of including this poem in the *Minstrelsy* was abandoned. It was completed some time in 1804—and with its completion, the poet was made.

Yet is it not characteristic of Scott that when he had this vivid work of his own invention in a state of forwardness, he should have turned from it, as he did, to complete a piece of editing? *Sir Tristram*, also intended for the third volume, had also grown till it needed a volume for itself, and for its introductory matter. This came out in May 1804, and for the time attracted little notice. But within a twelvemonth from then, anything to which Scott's name was attached found eager readers.

Even after a blazing success had thus offered every inducement for him to throw his full energy into literature, the way was made still easier for this lucky man.

In 1804, Captain Robert Scott died, and left his nephew Walter the house of Rosebank, which Scott sold for £5,000; thus finding himself, according to Lockhart, with a fixed income of close on a thousand a year, independent of earnings either at the bar, or from literature. One could not imagine a happier dispensation of favours. After a strenuous and frugal youth, competence was handed out to him in proportion as his needs grew with the increase of his family's. The *Minstrelsy* brought him a very appreciable reward, for, after he had already received £100 in profits for the first edition, Longman bought the copyright for £500 in 1804. He was then, as he told Wordsworth, sure that "he could, if he chose, get more money than he should ever wish to have from the booksellers."

By this time he had three children: Sophia, born in 1799, Walter in 1801, Anne, in 1803; the fourth and last, Charles Scott, was born in December 1805—after the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* had made it sure indeed that he could earn much from the booksellers.

But even in 1804 he still looked to literature merely as a pleasant way of supplementing the fruits of his own profession; and he did not underrate his own prospects in it. Men rise slow at the bar; yet before Scott was thirty, one of his friends, Mr. Kerr of Abbotsville, wrote that he was sure of seeing him Lord President, and that literary achievements would be only an addition to his professional repute.

Years later, when Murray sought to bring about friendly relations between the established poet and his young rival, Byron, the difficulty to be encountered was Byron's attack in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* on "Apollo's venal son," who sold *Marmion* for "just half a crown a line." Scott, as the elder man, had to make the first move; and in a letter to Byron he set out frankly facts which must be noted later in detail. But this is the place to emphasise one significant sentence.

"As to my attachment to literature, I sacrificed for the pleasure of pursuing it very fair chances of opulence and pro-

fessional honours, at a time of life when I fully knew their value, and I am not ashamed to say that in deriving advantages in compensation from the constant favour of the public, I have added some comforts and elegancies to a bare independence."

We have to think of Scott, therefore, at the very time when he was engaging in work that decided the bent of his future career, as still proposing to make the law his main concern in life, and literature an amateur's pleasant occupation.

## CHAPTER V

### THE "MINSTRELSY" AND THE MINSTREL

1799-1804

BEFORE passing on to consider the work by which Scott became famous, it is necessary to dwell more closely on the studies from which it issued. *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* has more importance than any other piece of his work for a biographer, not only because all that was best in his work in a sense grew out of it, but because it was deeply characteristic of the life of this writer that such should be his beginnings.

The years from 1799 to 1805 were those which decided the whole shape of Scott's life; they revealed to him the possibilities of his own talent, which he joyfully accepted. But it would be wrong to say that he found his vocation. That word implies what was always lacking in Scott—the sense of a mission. There was indeed one purpose constant in his writing, to celebrate and spread broadcast the glories of his native country. But the work through which he found his way to fame was not an effort to endow the world with his own thoughts or imaginings; it was a labour of love, to which he devoted a longer period than was ever spent on any of his own productions, and its object was to rescue from 'decay or disappearance, and make commonly and happily accessible, songs which had been made by other men. It was as if he had gone back to rekindle torches that had fallen in a long procession, and at the end found himself carrying a torch of his own, stronger and farther than any that had gone before him.

But, to be quite plain, Scott did not make literature his profession because he thought nothing else in the world worth doing, or because he would have felt unfaithful to the spirit within him unless he gave expression to his thought. He simply found that he could earn not only praise but profit by the exercise of an art in which he delighted; and he gave up all idea of seeking to rise high in his profession—though for reasons of prudence, and not of prudence only, he never abandoned the law. He did not give the best of his time and of his energy to writing until he had discovered that this would be the sensible as well as the pleasant thing to do; and the discovery came when he was, by comparison with other poets, well on in life. Also, the way in which he came to his discovery should be noted.

All through life Scott was, and was willingly, a servant in the house of literature as well as a master: and when he began seriously, he began as a servant. The translations from the German and the first ballads had only been recreation, pages in an amateur's sketch-book: but with the *Minstrelsy* he obeyed an impulse to service. His purpose was to save for literature and for the honour of his own countryside, the ballads which preserved much of its history, and were the expression of its rough chivalry.

In carrying out this purpose he found, almost by accident, where his own strength lay: also, he made friendships which affected his whole life. Yet it is necessary to be careful in statement. He did not become the Walter Scott that we know because he edited the *Border Minstrelsy*: he set out on that pious work because it gave a meaning to the passion which had sent him wandering over Liddesdale every year since he was his own master.

If it had not been the editing of the *Minstrelsy*, something else would undoubtedly have revealed the answer that, perhaps consciously, perhaps subconsciously, he was trying to find. He had felt, like scores of young men in every town at every time, a love for composition, and the desire to write; he had also thought, not in any mastering degree, the ambition to distinguish himself by writing. But—like scores of young



men in this also—he did not know what to write about. He was not one of those who are born or who grow up with “a message” as the cant is; with a whole group of poetic ideas craving for expression. His great contemporaries, Wordsworth, Shelley and Coleridge, all entered on life with a mass of brooding thought slowly taking shape in them; but Scott, by the time he was six and twenty, knew no more than that he wanted to write and that his first ballads had shown him he could write. It was a mark of his characteristic modesty that he still thought it more important to collect the ballads which others had written than to go on writing ballads himself; yet perhaps he was helped to this philosophy because the field in which he had been working, the imitation of German literature, did not offer food that satisfied him. He found his natural nourishment in the Border lays; for his mind was an historian’s by instinct. His chief concern was with what had happened, how it had happened; he was not content to know in bald outline, he must re-embody the past; and in stories like that of *Kinmont Willie* or *Jamie Telfer*, the past became present in flesh and blood. It took some time before he weaned himself from the fascination of the spectral imaginings that Lewis had brought into fashion: at first, he even sought to blend the lusty realism of the Borders with apparitions and ghostly machinery more congenial to the German taste. But very soon his vocation got the upper hand—the more easily because in Scott—ting the past this imaginative historian was occupied only with an astounding memory for significant broadcast of manners, but also with an observation of men and through that no one writing in English had equalled since Spenser’s time.

That, however, came later. Scott’s first achievement was to interest the reading public in the form of ballad literature which had special hold on his affection: his next was to carry the public off its feet with a poetry derived from these romances.

All this took time. His development was extraordinarily unhurried. He was over thirty when he became known to a considerable public as editor of old ballads: his first

successful poem appeared when he was thirty-four, and it was only eight years later that his genius found the form appropriate to its full expression when he became a better poet—more truly a "maker"—in prose than ever in verse.

Nevertheless, considering here the "making of a poet" in the more limited sense, it is well to review not only the *Minstrelsy* but its forerunners, the first heirs of his invention—eldest of as long a family in literature as ever one man fathered. The title page of his first volume reads:

"The Chase" and "William and Helen" from the German of Gottfried Augustus Bürger, Edinburgh, Printed by Mundell and Son, R. Bank Close, For Manners and Millers, Parliament Square; and sold by T. Cadell, Jun., and W. Davis (successor to Mr. Cadell) in the Strand, London, 1796.

The anonymous author, who figures in the foreword as "the Translator," apologises for a touch of plagiarism in the rendering of *Lenore*; and it is notable that he thinks it necessary to explain that "serf" means a vassal and that "to busk and boune is to dress and prepare oneself for a journey." Before many years this same author had made all such terms of mediæval lore familiar to everyone who read poetry. The first lines of *The Chase* were to have far-reaching echoes:

"Earl Walter winds his bugle horn;  
To horse, to horse, halloo, halloo!"

that

he sets the key for all that was most immediately captiv-  
ing in Walter Scott's verse; the beat of horsehoofs rings  
everywhere in this first tiny volume; and though its 'grey paper  
in blunt type,' found no great market for the moment,  
yet from that moment the hunt was up.

But Mundell and Son got no more work for their presses  
from this hurrying pen. *The Eve of St. John* was printed  
—and vastly better printed—by Ballantyne in 1800, at  
Kelso, a name strange and almost barbarous to book  
collectors in these days; but it became widely famous

from 1802 onwards when it appeared on the title-page of a work thus described :

Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads collected in the southern counties of Scotland, with a few of modern date, founded upon Local Tradition. In two volumes.

But when the second edition appeared in 1803, the place of imprint was Edinburgh. Ballantyne had made the change to which Scott had urged him so early as 1800.

Also in this new edition Longman and Rees usurped the place of Cadell and Davis, who had been the original publishers. But in both editions it is stated that the work was "sold by Manners and Miller, and A. Constable, Edinburgh." Constable had not yet even set up on his own account as publisher.

The book's dedication is entirely characteristic :

"To His Grace, Henry, Duke of Buccleuch, these Tales which in elder times have celebrated the prowess and cheered the halls of his gallant Ancestors are respectfully inscribed by His Grace's much obliged and most humble servant, Walter Scott.

EDINBURGH, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1801."

The introduction gave a spirited review of Border history, from the thirteenth century when "descendants of the Saxon families who fled from the exterminating sword of the Conqueror, with many of the Normans themselves whom discontent and feud had driven into exile, began to rise into eminence upon the Scottish borders." All the earlier part of this recital is dominated by the name of Douglas, terrible even in its declining fortunes. But in the sixteenth century, the laird of Buccleuch, heading what his enemies called "all the thieves of Annandaie and Liddesdale," boldly challenged the Earl of Angus, then the leading Douglas. A fierce encounter took place on the hill slopes overlooking Melrose; Buccleuch was driven back, and hot

on his heels came the Laird of Cessford, chief of the Kerrs, till a Liddesdale reiver turned on the pursuers, and

"Gallant Cessford's lifeblood dear  
Reeked on dark Elliot's border spear."

"Turnagain" was the name left on the place of that slaying, which led to centuries of feud between the names of Scott and Kerr.—Yet the Scott who gathered the *Minstrelsy* came to be laird of the land that held Turnagain, and was friend alike of the Duke of Roxburgh, head of the Kerrs, whose place of Fleurs was beside Kelso, and of his own clan's head, whose "fair Bowhill" was only an hour's ride from Abbotsford.

After the history, the Introduction proceeds to a study of the manners, the religion ("about which there is very little to be said"), the superstitions (an ampler subject), and the domestic economy of the Borderers. Finally we come to a classification of the material.

"The historical ballad relates events which we either know actually to have taken place or which at least, making due allowance for the exaggerations of poetical tradition, many readily conceive to have had some foundation in history. . . .

"Whether they were originally the composition of minstrels, professing the joint arts of poetry and music, or whether they were the occasional effusions of some self-taught bard, is a question into which I do not here mean to inquire. But it is certain that, till a very late period, the pipers, of whom there was one attached to each Border town of note, and whose office was often hereditary, were the great depositaries of oral, and particularly of poetical, tradition. About spring time, and after harvest, it was the custom of these musicians to make a progress through a particular district of the country. The music and the tale repaid their lodging, and they were usually gratified with a donation of seed corn. . . .

"By means of these men, much traditional poetry was preserved, which must otherwise have perished. Other itinerants, not professed musicians, found their welcome to their night's quarters readily insured by their knowledge in legendary lore. John Graeme of Sowport, in Cumberland, commonly called *The Long Quaker*, a person of this latter description, was very lately alive, and several of the songs, now published, have been

taken down from his recitation. The shepherds also, and aged persons, in the recesses of the Border mountains, frequently remember and repeat the warlike songs of their fathers. This is more especially the case in what are called the South Highlands, where, in many instances, the same families have occupied the same possessions for centuries.

"It is chiefly from this latter source that the Editor has drawn his materials, most of which were collected many years ago, during his early youth."

These oral sources had been supplemented and corrected by reference to the manuscript collection left by Mr. Riddell of Glenriddell. Scott avows that, where versions disagreed, he took what seemed "the best or most poetical reading." He adds that "the prejudices of clans and of districts have occasioned variations in the mode of telling the same story." And although he declares that "no liberties have been taken" beyond what were "essentially necessary to remove obvious corruptness," it would appear that "the prejudice of clans" had not died out before Scott's own day. At all events, it is certain that in several of the ballads his versions contain passages in honour of the "Rough Clan," which do not occur in other supposed originals. For instance in "The Outlaw Murray," the song tells "the lord, hight Hamilton," proposed that the King should go to meet the formidable outlaw. In Scott's version, and in Scott's only, three stanzas follow about "the kene laird of Bucksleuth," of which this is the third.

"Then out and spak the nobil King,  
And round him cast a wilie ee—  
'Now haud thy tongue, Sir Walter Scott,  
Nor speik of reif nor felonie:  
For, had every honeste man his awin kye,  
A right puir clan thy name wad be'!"

It is possible that Scott's predecessor in the Shrievalty may have given Scott these verses: and to say truth, they have no ring of Scott's own composition. But the jest of the concluding couplet was so much to the taste of this earlier Sir Walter Scott's descendant that it surely was a

form of clan prejudice which led to their insertion in the *Minstrelsy*.

For the Romantic Ballads, which comprehended "such legends as are current upon the border relating to fictitious and marvellous adventures," there was a much wider field of research and selection, since these were spread among the whole peasantry of Scotland; whereas the historical lays were only preserved in "the mountains where they were originally composed." Several books of Romantic Ballads in manuscript were placed at Scott's disposal, and he made his choice.

Last came the Modern Imitations. "They are founded," says the Introduction, "upon such traditions as we may suppose in the elder times would have employed the harps of the minstrels. This kind of poetry has been supposed capable of uniting the vigorous numbers and wild fiction which occasionally charm us in the ancient ballad, with a greater equality of versification and elegance of sentiment than we can expect to find in the works of a rude age."

So the future Minstrel defined the purpose which he carried out. But in the first two volumes which appeared in 1802, there were only four of these pieces—two of them ("The Eve of St. John" and "Glenfinlas") by Scott, and two by Leyden. In the third volume, published a year later, there were ten of these, to which Scott contributed "Cadyow Castle," written in 1802, the "Grey Brother," an uncompleted ballad, of the same date as "Glenfinlas," and a very different (and indifferent) production, "The War Song of the Royal Edinburgh Light Dragoons", first written in 1797 "during the apprehension of an invasion," and now in 1803 republished in the same mood—invasion by France being once more a menace.

"Cadyow Castle" comes nearer to Scott's true line of development; it tells with much heightening of colour the tale of a historic and bloody deed; but it is best remembered for a couple of stanzas which for the first time show us the poet in full power:

"Mightiest of all the beasts of chase  
That roam in woody Caledon,

Crashing the forest in his race,  
The Mountain Bull comes thundering on.

Fierce on the hunter's quiver'd band  
He rolls his eyes of swarthy glow,  
Spurns with black hoof and horn the sand,  
And tosses high his mane of snow."

Leiden furnished one of the others; Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe two; Colin Mackenzie and the Rev. Dr. Jameson one each; while Monk Lewis repaid Scott's contributions to *Tales of Wonder* by "Sir Agilthorn," and even Miss Anna Seward was of the company.

No abiding place in literature can be claimed for any of these "Imitations." Scott's own handful among them are remembered because they are Scott's—and perhaps for incidental felicities, like the mountain bull stanzas in "Cadyow Castle"—though these mar the simplicity of the ballad proper. He had not yet fully learnt the lessons of the school in which he was working. These later on, bore fruit in ballads and songs which are part of the inheritance stored not only in a hundred anthologies but in the memory of all who love Scottish verse.

Motherwell, who published in 1827, a collection of *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, computes that the *Border Minstrelsy* gave to the ordinary reader forty three ballads never before accessible. These included "Jamie Telfer," "Kinmont Willie," "The Wife of Usher's Well" and "Johnny Armstrong's Goodnight," to name only a few. Perhaps we might have had these things without Scott's intervention; but it is very doubtful whether the taste for these things would have been so widespread as it is among English-speaking lovers of poetry without the impetus given by this transmitter of the border inspiration. These ballads have never had the vogue that Scott's own metrical romances attained; for the work that appealed to generations of Border raiders and riders and to their descendants appeals now only to those who know, when they meet it, the force and sincerity of unsophisticated poetry. Only such can find living interest even in the dull tracts of rhyming prose

which are too often set about the trenchant stanzas where the song suddenly takes fire. For every ten readers who have a true enjoyment of Keats and Shelley or Tennyson and Browning, scarcely one will feel the attraction of "Jamie Telfer" and "Kinmont Willie." Accomplished work, in whatever generation it is written, easily wins its way, and we are all of us by centuries nearer to Chaucer, the scholar and courtier, than to the old crowder or minstrel who sang of these hard-fisted hard-headed, mosstrooping bandits or border-wardens. Yet these poems have as many lovers now as in Scott's day; they do not wear out. Time has wilted Scott's own romances; but "Sir Patrick Spens" is as good for us as it was for him or any of his contemporaries.

Also, another service has to be reacknowledged. We read "Sir Patrick Spens" as Scott gave it to us; and it has not a few touches of his own. He added (as we learn from Mr. Henderson's superb critical edition of the *Minstrelsy*) the stanza:

"To Noroway, to Noroway,  
To Noroway o'er the faem,  
The King's daughter of Noroway,  
'Tis thou maun bring her hame."

Mr. Henderson holds that Scott always was credulous in his desire to assign an exact historical origin to these ballads; and that he put in this stanza to make clear to all what was clear to himself (as it might have been to Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck of Monkbarns) that Sir Patrick's mission was to fetch to Scotland the historic Maid of Norway. That may very likely be. But who denies that the stanza which Scott added is among those that we chant over to ourselves with most pleasure?

Again, take another verse:

"They hadna sailed a league, a league  
A league but barely three,  
When the lift grew dark, and the wind blew loud,  
And gurly grew the sea."



Scott introduced into the first couplet the repetition, which was one of his favourite artifices; but he wrote the second couplet bodily. Is there a better in the ballad?

It is not to be said that he can be compared with Robert Burns as a renovator of these ancient relics. Burns was among the greatest masters of style that literature has known; and whether in prose or verse, Scott's style was his weakness. But when he achieved noble literary expression in verse, it was almost invariably in the language and the manner of this school of song. Again, in the very best of all the ballads, "Helen of Kirkconnell," where the nameless maker rises to an intensity that Scott himself never reached in verse—Scott contributed the last line but one of the exquisite closing verse:—

"I wish I were where Helen lies!  
Night and day on me she cries;  
And I am weary of the skies,  
For her sake that died for me."

One stroke like this amply atones for the defect in critical instinct which allowed him to include three forgeries—one of them very well worth inclusion among the professed imitations—by his friend Surtees.

It is easy to see what a schooling for this belated minstrel was afforded by such work; what an admirable off-set this rough, crude, passionate poetry, with its close adherence to the language of common life, made to all the graceful and elegant contemporary work which Scott, after his fashion, regarded with undue leniency. Not only was it a counterpoise to the Joanna Baillies and the rest, but also to the fantastic extravagances of the German ballads which had so fired his imagination. These Border poets were rooted deep in the common facts of life; and whenever Scott attained to his very best in verse, he was not far from the Border style. "Proud Maisie," "The Battle of Harlaw," "Bonnie Dundee," the "Coronach," the snatches of verse given to Meg Merrilies, Davie Gellatley, and Madge Wildfire—in a word, Scott's lyrics and lyrical ballads—are better

and more enduring than even the *Lay* and *Marmion*, which already seem, as "Proud Maisie" or the "Coronach" can never seem, a little demoded.

Yet though the success of the *Border Minstrelsy* turned Scott to poetry, it was perhaps not his poetry that in the long run benefited most by the years of work and play which went to make that collection. If the poet was at school there, so also and even more assuredly was the novelist. Mr. Henderson cites Lockhart's quotation of some contemporary reviewer who remarked that the introductions to the ballads contained the matter for a hundred historical romances. It was a true word: and be it observed that the historical series of ballads stops short of the "Forty-five," and of all the mass of Jacobite verse which must have been minutely familiar to the Author of *Waverley*. But, to take a leading instance, the whole germination of *Old Mortality* can be guessed at from the three ballads of "The Battle of Pentland Hills," "Loudon Hill," and "Bothwell Bridge," taken with the illustrative matter in the introductions—citations from Peden, and such like. Poor stuff enough they are, these ballads; but—and here is the essential point—we read them in cold print. Scott heard at least one of them read out by a friend who had taken it down from the lips of an old woman in the West Country.

Also, no doubt, Mr. Henderson is right in holding that Scott was uncritical in accepting local tradition, as for instance that which made "the Douglas Tragedy" happen at Blackhouse, where Laidlaw lived, in Ettrick. It even pointed out seven large stones as marking the spot where Lady Margaret's seven pursuing brethren were slain by her bold lover; it identified the very burn at which the fugitives stopped to drink, and where Lady Margaret saw in the water what Lord William bid her believe was "but the shadow of his scarlet cloak." "So minute," says Scott, "is tradition in ascertaining the scene of a tragical tale which, considering the rude state of former times, had probably foundation in some real event." On this Mr. Henderson bluntly comments: "The seven hostile brethren are, of course, common to several ballads, and were probably

buried neither at Blackhoy<sup>se</sup> nor any other where," and "the ascription of complete locality is of little account." Historically, the modern critic is doubtless right; but it is very fortunate that Scott accepted this and other traditions, which peopled the Borders for him not with the living only but the dead. No man knew better than Scott the value of the appeal to local sympathy, for no man felt it more strongly.

"Tell a peasant," he wrote to Miss Seward, "an ordinary tale of robbery and murder and perhaps you may fail to interest him; but, to excite his terrors, you tell him it happened on the very heath he usually crosses, or to a man whose family he has known, and you rarely meet such a mere image of humanity as remains entirely unmoved."

Scott's belief in his own historical ascriptions and identifications, if not wholly critical, fed his imagination with the most congenial matter; and it rested always on a mass of general knowledge which justified him in saying that such a happening as was described in the Douglas ballad might have taken place where he chose to believe that it did.

In truth the historical ballads were a better school for the prose writer than for the poet. Their charm lies in the straightforward simple narration, comparable to that of the Icelandic sagas. "Jamie Telfer" and "Hobbie Noble," without any special literary merit, make us as familiar with the days of cattle-lifting as some poacher's ingenuous narrative might with the business of burning a water for salmon. The men who told these stories wrote with their eye on the object, for they wrote or composed for an audience familiar with that way of life. But they were forced by the exigencies of verse to pick out the salient points, the marking features of the event; they could not ramble discursively as they might well have done in prose; yet the formula of the verse was so lax as to enable them to say with precision just what they meant. More literary in the strict sense are the love-ballads; such, for instance, as "The Broom of Cowdenknowes." The pattern of the story is simple and conventional, but it abounds in dramatic touches and strongly realised pictures. One may be cited,

for the sake of Effie Deans: the lass of Cowdenknowes, with milk-pail poised, was surely in Scott's mind when he wrote of Jeanie's pretty sister coming back, no more a maiden, through the bracken.

.  
"She set the cog upon her head  
And she's gone singing hame—  
'O where hae ye been, my ae daughter?  
Ye hae na been your lane'."

In applying the lessons which a poet may learn from these old writers of narrative verse, Scott showed some lack of literary discernment. He believed that the ballads were imperfect and partial adaptations of longer and more finished romances, such as have come down to us in Norman French, and such as Chaucer imitated. There is something to be said for his theory, and it is borne out, for instance, by comparatively modern ballads in Irish which condense and curtail such a story as that of Cuchulain's fight with his own son. Yet considering the Scotch literature by itself, the manner of the ballad seems radically distinct from that of the romance, and it has a capacity for the lyrical accent which is not found in the more even flow of a long poem in a continuous metre. And, especially in its natural form, it rebels against all amplification, such as Scott himself superimposed on it in the "Eve of St. John," "Glenfinlas," and his other imitations. The ballad should go straight to its goal without stopping by the way, describing only what is happening; and this was Scott's own method when he was finely inspired, as in "The Battle of Harlaw," a piece of narrative from which it would be impossible to suppress a word, save the singing repetitions.

Another thing has to be remarked on the manner proper to the ancient ballads—that they frequently presupposed recitation by a minstrel, who would preface it by some account of what he had to sing. Take, for example, the opening of "The Douglas Tragedy," which, if recited, would be quite obscure to an uninstructed audience:

“ ‘Rise up, rise up now, Lord Douglas,’ she says,  
 ‘And put on your armour so bright;  
 Let it never be said that a daughter of thine  
 Was married to a lord under night.’ ”

The trained reader may infer the speaker’s quality, but for an audience, explanation is necessary. The Scotch bard, however, knew that to get an effective opening it was better to plunge boldly *in medias res*, than to conform to the more methodic English fashion, and begin thus:

“ It grieveth me to tell you, O!  
 Near London what late did befall  
 ’Twixt two young gallant gentlemen:  
 It grieveth me, and ever shall.”

The modern maker of ballads is in this respect at a disadvantage, for he cannot assume an interpreter, and is practically confined to one of the more explicit and less telling ways of leading off—of which there are, of course, many and often excellent examples in the *Minstrelsy*.

Many ways may go to the making of a poet, and all of them must include intense study of other men’s verse. Wordsworth, Scott’s friend and contemporary, had his discipleship in solitude and long, lonely walks; he had one thing only in common with Scott, his love for the beauty of wild nature and his feeling for the speech of people who lived on the soil. Yet it is plain enough to all who study Wordsworth that Milton was his true master. In literature, Scott’s truest master, when he came to his power, was Shakespeare; but in so far as the poet in him was the verse writer, that poet was made, not in solitude but in the gathering up of old songs, which he found like wild flowers growing, and in the search for which he was continually mixing with all sorts and conditions of men.

## CHAPTER VI

### “THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.”

1804-5

THIS is a story of Scott's life, rather than a criticism of his works; and it is therefore right to tell first how the poem by which he suddenly became famous came into being. The beginning of the *Lay*, was, as has been told already, a demand—or a command—from Lady Dalkeith. The minstrel set to work; and what he began with was a story of the uncanny and the supernatural.

“The feast was over in Branksome tower,  
And the Ladye had gone to her secret bower;  
Her bower that was guarded by word and by spell,  
Deadly to hear, and deadly to tell—  
Jesu Maria, shield us well!  
No living wight, save the Ladye alone,  
Had dared to cross the threshold stone.”

Further, he began in a new and carefully studied manner. Hitherto his minstrelsy had been in the stanza of the old balladists; now, seeking to get to something more capable of variety, he found an example in the irregular strongly accentuated rhythm of Coleridge's “Christabel.” This discipleship lasts throughout all the first seven stanzas; then comes a definite break and we meet what was to be Scott's own manner, a continuous yet slightly varied flow of the eight syllabled couplet. He tells us that he began the poem at Lasswade and read the opening stanzas,—which no doubt are these seven—to Erskine, his most trusted

critic, and to another friend; and they discouraged him. Later, he learnt that his verses had stuck in their memory, as Coleridge's had haunted his own; and when occasion offered, he decided to go on with the poem.—The occasion was characteristic. While the Edinburgh Horse were out on Portobello Sands, practising a charge, the Quartermaster got a kick from another trooper's horse which laid him up for three days in his lodgings at Musselburgh. At the end of those three days the first canto was finished. This was in the autumn of 1802.

We next hear of the *Lay* in the following April. Leyden was on the point of leaving for India, and Scott hurried up to London to say farewell. Mrs. Scott was with him: and they went for a week to be the guests of George Ellis at Sunninghill. There, Lockhart says, "under an old oak in Windsor Forest Mr. and Mrs. Ellis heard the first two or three cantos of the *Lay* read aloud."

Almost certainly Scott had then added to the central romance the figure of the old Minstrel who tells the medieval tale, but whose own memories and fortunes belong to a much later age.

Heber was in town at this time; so was Mackintosh, whom Scott had known of old in Edinburgh, and who had fame as a talker. Through them he met Samuel Rogers and William Stewart Rose, a scholar and antiquarian. If the *Lay* was recited to them, we have no record of it; but the chances are that they heard some passages; for the talk was all of poetry. Under Heber's guidance, the Scotts went to Oxford and visited his younger brother, Reginald Heber, afterwards bishop, at Brasenose. A great horse chestnut tree that grows in Exeter Gardens and over-shadows Brasenose Lane is still called Heber's tree—though debate exists as to whether Heber's rooms were those on the first or the second floor at the angle of the college. But it was in Heber's rooms that Scott heard Heber's poem "Palestine," which had just won the Newdigate prize. He observed that in the passage on Solomon's Temple one striking point had been omitted: no tools were used in its erection. Reginald Heber, struck by

the thought, sat down by himself in a corner of the room and came back with the lines,

“No hammer fell, no ponderous axes rang,  
Like some tall palm the mystic fabric sprang.”

If the poem is still remembered, it owes its survival to Scott's knowledge of the Bible, and to his gift of memory, which always picked out the significant detail.

In the autumn of this year he met for the first time a great poet. Wordsworth and his sister, returning from their tour in the Highlands, arranged to visit the editor of the *Minstrelsy*. They walked down from Rosslyn to Lasswade, so early that Scott and his wife were not yet up; a fact which is worth noting, for once Scott had definitely made writing a profession, five o'clock was his hour to rise.

At that first meeting, Wordsworth heard the first four cantos of the *Lay*; “partly read and partly recited in an enthusiastic style of chant”—so Wordsworth wrote to Lockhart, thirty years later—“and the novelty of the manner, the clear, picturesque descriptions, and the easy glowing energy of much of the verse, greatly delighted me.”

Further than that, Wordsworth never went in praise of Scott's poetry; he never thought of it as work of the first order. But from the first Wordsworth's acceptance of the man was hearty and sincere.

“We were received with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I afterwards met him, always marked his manners; and, indeed, I found him then in every respect—except, perhaps, that his animal spirits were somewhat higher—precisely the same man that you knew him in later life; the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote, and averse from disquisition; the same unaffected modesty about himself; the same cheerful and benevolent and hopeful views of man and the world.”

Scott saw his visitors back to Rosslyn and trusted to meet them at Melrose, where they spent a night. Words-



worth and Scott shared a room; but, as Dorothy Wordsworth notes in her diary, the landlady would agree to nothing "until she had ascertained from the Sheriff himself that he had no objection to sleep in the same room with William."

At Jedburgh Assizes they saw the Sheriff,—not by his will ("for I really would not like you to see the sort of figure I cut there" he told them)—"in his cocked hat and sword marching in the judge's procession to the sound of one cracked trumpet" on the way to the Circuit Court. But when Court was over, Scott brought up his farmer friend Laidlaw, who had read some of Wordsworth's verses in a newspaper, and was eager to meet the poet; and the party of them explored all the valley of the Jed and the ruins of its old castle.

Next day he took them along the Teviot to Hawick and led them to a point where they could see all the landmarks of the Border, Ruberslaw's conical peak, the great mound of Carter Fell, and the Cheviots beyond. Here they were on the edge of Liddesdale, through which their way led to Carlisle; and Scott lamented that he could not be their companion through its glens "where I have strolled so often and so long that I may say I have a home in every farmhouse." They had no difficulty in crediting this, for once they had met him, they found his name an open sesame. "I believe," Wordsworth wrote to Lockhart, "that in the character of the Sheriff's friends we might have counted on a hearty welcome under any roof in Border country."

This, let it be noted, was before Scott's fame began. It was not the Wizard of the North that commanded welcome for his friends; it was the "Shirra"—the man whom the Border had taken to its heart long before he was famous.

At the end of that journey Wordsworth wrote to Scott from Grassmere.

"My sister and I often talk of the happy days that we spent in your company. Such things do not occur often in life. If we live, we shall meet again; that is my consolation when I think of

these things. . . . Farewell. God prosper you, and all that belongs to you. Your sincere friend, for such I will call myself, though slow to use a word of such solemn meaning to any one—  
W. WORDSWORTH."

Wordsworth's nature was indeed slow to expand; he was not soon won to friendship; and in many ways he, the dreamer, and Scott, the would-be soldier, were far apart. But friends they were from the first meeting, and friends they remained in no casual or superficial sense.

With lesser men, this friendship might have been easily clouded by jealousy. Wordsworth had to see Scott's poetry leap not merely into sudden popularity, but into fame, while his own by comparison was slighted; and Scott had to content himself with a measure of praise from his fellow-poet which fell very far short of that accorded to the same works by the foremost personages of his time. Even the greater gods in literature have not always been exempt from pettinesses. It should be remembered that to Scott every man of his famous contemporaries with whom he came into personal touch showed the best and most genial side of his nature in Scott's company.

The *Lay* was written at high speed, a canto in a week, according to Skene; but though Wordsworth heard four of the six cantos in September 1803, the poem was not ready for publication till the last days of 1804. Scott gave precedence to *Sir Tristram*, as has been seen; also, he had begun to do a good deal of work for the *Edinburgh Review* which started in October 1802 (under Sydney Smith), but soon passed into Jeffrey's hands. In October 1803, Scott furnished a critical study of Southey's *Amadis de Gaul* and another on Sibbald's *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*. In the course of 1804 three articles by him appeared—all on subjects to which his antiquarian learning had relevance: Goodwin's *Life of Chaucer*, Ellis's *Specimens of Ancient English Poetry*, and the *Life and Works of Chatterton*.

But over and above these literary labours, and the duties of his profession, was a vast deal of volunteering. After the short and hollow Peace of Amiens, a stormy interview

took place between Bonaparte and the British Ambassador, in which renewal of war was threatened by the Chief Consul, with the declaration that invasion of England would be attempted. War was declared—by Britain—on May 18th, 1803. Scott himself in his *Life of Napoleon* has described the conditions that then existed.

“It must be in the memory of most who recollect the period, that the Kingdom of Great Britain was seldom less provided against invasion than at the commencement of this second war; and that an embarkation from the ports of Holland, if undertaken instantly after the war had broken out, might have escaped our blockading squadrons, and have at least shown what a French army could have done on British ground, at a moment when the alarm was general, and the country in an unprepared state. But it is probable that Buonaparte himself was as much unprovided as England for the sudden breach of the treaty of Amiens.

“He now, however, at length bent himself, with the whole strength of his mind, and the whole force of his empire, to prepare for this final and decisive undertaking. . . . Boulogne was pitched upon as the centre port, from which the expedition was to sail. By incredible exertions, Buonaparte had rendered its harbour and roads capable of containing two thousand vessels of various descriptions. The smaller seaports of Vimereux, Ambleteuse, and Etaples, Dieppe, Havre, St. Valeri, Caen, Gravelines, and Dunkirk, were likewise filled with shipping. Flushing and Ostend were occupied by a separate flotilla. Brest, Toulon, and Rochefort, were each the station of as strong a naval squadron as France had still the means to send to sea.

“A land army was assembled of the most formidable description, whether we regard the high military character of the troops, the extent and perfection of their appointments, or their numerical strength. The coast, from the mouth of the Seine to the Texel, was covered with forces; and Soult, Ney, Davoust, and Victor, names that were then the pride and the dread of war, were appointed to command the Army of England (for that menacing title was once more assumed), and execute those manœuvres, planned and superintended by Buonaparte, the issue of which was to be the blotting out of Britain from the rank of independent nations.

“ . . . On a sudden, the land seemed converted to an immense camp, the whole nation into soldiers, and the good old King himself into a general-in-chief. All peaceful considerations appeared for a time to be thrown aside; and the voice, calling the nation to defend their dearest rights, sounded not

only in Parliament, and in meetings convoked to second the measures of defence, but was heard in the places of public amusement, and mingled even with the voice of devotion—not unbecomingly surely, since to defend our country is to defend our religion.

“Beacons were erected in conspicuous points, corresponding with each other, all around and all through the island; and morning and evening, one might have said, every eye was turned towards them to watch for the fatal and momentous signal.”

Scott’s private letters of 1803 help us to translate this general description into the particular. He wrote to Ellis on October 14th :

“The necessity of the present occasion has kept almost every individual, however insignificant, to his post. God has left us entirely to our own means of defence, for we have not above one regiment of the line in all our ancient kingdom. In the meanwhile, we are doing the best we can to prepare ourselves for a contest, which, perhaps, is not far distant. A beacon light, communicating with that of Edinburgh Castle, is just erecting in front of our quiet cottage. My field equipage is ready, and I want nothing but a pipe and a *schmurbartchen* (moustache) to convert me into a complete hussar.”

Added to these military distractions were household affairs—in a sense arising from them. Lord Napier, the Lord Lieutenant of Selkirkshire, complained that Scott’s devotion to military duty interfered with his work as sheriff, and insisted that by law the Sheriff should reside for four months yearly within his shrievalty. Scott resented this at first, not liking to be separated from his troop of good comrades; but finally, in 1804, he decided to give up Lasswade and become tenant of a house which he knew of old. This was Ashestiel, then little more than a farmhouse, on the steep southern bank of the Tweed. Its owner, Colonel Russell, had married a Miss Rutherford, sister of Scott’s mother; and Scott had stayed there as a boy. Colonel Russell’s death now, left the place vacant, as his son, Scott’s cousin, was soldiering in India; and accordingly, after a fortnight spent with his yeomanry, Scott moved in during July 1804.

It was a lodge in the Forest, beyond doubt.

"We are seven miles from kirk and market," he wrote to Ellis, "we rectify the last inconvenience by killing our own mutton and poultry; and as to the former, finding there was some chance of my family turning pagans, I have adopted the goodly practice of reading prayers every Sunday, to the great edification of my household. Think of this, you that have the happiness to be within two steps of the church, and commiserate those who dwell in the wilderness."

He did not deserve much commiseration. The house has been enlarged since; but it held him and his, and was never without a bedroom for visitors. From the terrace outside the house one could almost throw a stone into the beautiful great river, rippling and swirling over a broad, shallow reach, perhaps a hundred feet below the house; for the bank falls to it very steeply. Pilgrims will wonder why he complained so often of the lack of trees in the landscape; but in fact we see there and all along the richly wooded slopes of the Tweed a noble result of Walter Scott's preaching and example; for he was there, and at Abbotsford, a great tree planter.

Hardly any neighbours of his own class were within visiting distance; but for all his sociability, he never disliked solitude; and all about him was unlimited range of sport for horse and hound, rod and gun. Also, if the gentry were not to hand, other company was plentiful. He had the project of putting Hogg in charge of his sheep farm, but this (luckily) fell through; and the care of Ashestiel was committed instead to Tom Purdie—first known to Scott as a culprit brought before the Sheriff's court. "The Shirra" took a fancy to the poacher who told a frank story of his difficulties and temptations, and took him on as shepherd. The engagement was for life; Scott lived to write the inscription upon this old retainer's grave. The coachman, Peter Mathieson, whom also he engaged at this time, likewise became part and parcel of the family; and he drove the carriage that carried Scott's remains to Dryburgh. In that old-fashioned world such long employments were

not uncommon; but certainly no man ever got or gave more affection in this relationship than did Sir Walter.

The move to Ashestiel marked the decisive change in his fortunes: he had scarcely moved in before success came beating at his door.

The *Lay* was out of Scott's hands and into the printer's before the end of August 1804, and it was published in a very handsome quarto in the first week of the new year. His letter to Ellis, to herald its arrival, lets us know that he, his wife and his family had so fallen in love with Ashestiel that they were setting out in a snowstorm on December 30th, to drive the thirty miles and spend Hogmanay by the banks of Tweed.

"Our march has been ordered with great military talent—a detachment of minced pies and brandy having preceded us. In case we are not buried in a snow-wreath, our stay will be but short. Should that event happen, we must wait the thaw."

Within a fortnight after that was written, Scott had become famous. He says himself (in his Introduction to the general edition of his works in 1830):

"It would be great affectation not to own that the author expected some success from the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. The attempt to return to a more simple and natural poetry was likely to be welcomed at a time when the public had become tired of heroic hexameters, with all the buckram and binding that belong to them in modern times. But whatever might have been his expectations, whether reasonable or unreasonable, the result left them far behind."

The sale was prodigious; and, as he notes himself, among his praisers were the great names of Pitt and Fox. With an easy careless hand he had plucked down fame, virtually at the first attempt. For although he had published translations, it is not by translations that fame is won; and his half-dozen original ballads had first been included with other work, in Lewis's *Tales of Wonder*—an unsuccessful publication; later, they had appeared in the *Minstrelsy of*

*the Border* only as a feature subordinate to the book's main purpose.

No doubt, however, the *Minstrelsy* powerfully helped the *Lay*. All the best brains and breeding in Scotland had been interested in that vivid revival of the past, and in the young man to whom they owed it. The public mind was turned by it to those themes of which Scott must make his poetry, if he made poetry at all. But when his own poem came, it took by storm, not only those whose feelings were thus prepared, but the whole world of readers.

Hogg in his *Queen's Wake* has wrought the story of that triumph into a potent image. "On Ettrick banks and Yarrow," his poem tells, there lay mouldering a harp of ancient power, too long neglected.

"The day arrived—blest be the day,  
Walter the Abbot came that way—  
The sacred relic met his view.  
Ah! well the pledge of heaven he knew;  
He screw'd the chords, he tried a strain,  
'Twas wild—he turned and tried again.  
Then poured the numbers, bold and free,  
The ancient magic melody.  
The land was charmed to list his lays,  
It knew the harp of ancient days."

Criticism to-day will not endorse the preference which Scott's contemporaries, and Hogg among them, felt sincerely for the polished work over the rude, and for the imitation over the original. The edifice of Sir Walter's fame rests on other and infinitely stronger foundations than those on which it first began to be erected. It is true that after five generations Scott's poems are more generally familiar to lovers of literature than almost any of their time—incomparably more so than Byron's; yet in a sense the quality of that familiarity carries their sentence. The opening of the *Lay* for instance, which appeared to Jeffrey among the very best things in the poem, is known almost by heart to all educated English readers; and yet we turn back to it, only to find that we have exhausted its content. That

does not happen with great poetry. There are passages in Virgil, in Shakespeare, in Milton, in Wordsworth, in Tennyson, which thousands of us have read or repeated to ourselves indefinitely, and yet, read or repeated, they move us as at first, or more than at first. There is that in them which defies analysis as it defies translation; an inner radiance like that of a noble gem, or, to speak more justly, of some great painting. It may be the weight and intensity of the mood as in :

“To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.”

Or it may be a charm of freshness, or tender airy lightness, as in *Twelfth Night* when the Duke praises Feste's song :

“Mark it, Cesario ; it is old, and plain :  
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,  
And the free maids, that weave their thread with bones.  
Do use to chant it : it is silly sooth,  
And dallies with the innocence of love,  
Like the old age.”

There is nothing anywhere in Scott's sustained poems which one can set beside such passages as these, without seeing it wilt and shrivel and evaporate into empty sound. But, if we take, for instance, this very song of Feste's, “Come away, come away, death,” or any of its adorable compeers, we meet the supreme examples of a kind of poetry, irresistible and irrational as birdsong, in which English literature is astonishingly rich. To that treasure house Scott has brought much ; and the first of these additions—though not the surest of permanent acceptance—is to be found inset in the *Lay*—the ballad of Rosabelle.

For the moment, however, it is best to consider the poem at large. Writing while the *Lay* was in progress, in a review



of Southey's translation of "Amadis of Gaul," Scott has given his views on the "metrical romances." They were, he held, composed to be recited, not read, and were therefore rhapsodical strings of loosely connected adventures, only one or two of which could be recounted at a time. The sole connection in the poem's structure was made by the same persons figuring in episodes, "otherwise as much detached from each other as the scenes in the booth of a showman."

"But when a book was substituted for the minstrel's song, so that the student might turn back to resume the connection which had escaped him, it became the study of the author to give a greater appearance of uniformity to his work. An arrangement in which all the incidents should seem to conduce to one general end became necessarily a merit and an object."

As schoolboys, Scott and his companion, Irving, had made up romances, strung together like the Minstrel's only, by having the same persons. But reading and observation had taught this born storyteller to seek for "a combined and regular progress of the story."

The *Lay* is his first attempt—and a botched one, so far as the incidents are designed to conduce to one general end. It was no doubt an early sense of this incoherence that set him to invent the framework which holds the fabric together, and which also gives occasion for those breaks in narrative that occurred naturally in the metrical romance when it was made to be sung or spoken.

Most skilfully in his felicitous opening, Scott blended with the needs of his composition the minstrel's duty of compliment. He wrote at the bidding of the Countess of Dalkeith, who would in time be Duchess of Buccleuch; and the scene opens in what was still Buccleuch's seat of pride when "a stranger held the Stuarts' throne," and the last minstrel was a wandering beggar. The beggar was made welcome to "Newark's stately tower" at the bidding of Newark's mistress. In celebrating the kindness and the beauty of a Duchess who ruled at Newark in the day of William of Orange, Scott is really bent to praise his "lovely chieftainess" (as he calls her in one letter); and when he

tells how the old wanderer, summoned to tune his harp before the Duchess and her ladies, falters and trembles, till

“The pitying Duchess prais’d its chime,  
And gave him heart, and gave him time,”

he frames a happy lead to a passage which still keeps much of its original fire, as it tells of the singer gathering confidence and regaining power ;

“In varying cadence, soft or strong,  
He swept the sounding chords along :  
The present scene, the future lot,  
His toils, his wants, were all forgot ;  
Cold diffidence, and age’s frost,  
In the full tide of song were lost.”

There is much more than compliment here ; there is imagination kindling noble eloquence, which is the rhetoric of poetry ; yet even in the scene’s conception a dedicatory tribute is implied. The verses are the not yet accepted poet’s grateful return for gracious encouragement. The *Lay* is inscribed to “The Right Honourable Charles Earl of Dalkeith” ; but the true dedication is to be found in this passage, and in that other at the close which tells how the old wanderer found a resting-place ; how

“Close beneath proud Newark’s tower,  
Arose the Minstrel’s humble bower” ;

where he could “give the aid he begged before.”

Nothing is said here of the benefactress ; but her bounty is celebrated, and the fruit that her bounty bore.

“So pass’d the winter’s day ; but still,  
When summer smil’d on sweet Bowhill,  
And July’s eve, with balmy breath,  
Wav’d the blue-bells on Newark heath ;  
When throstles sung in Hareheadshaw,  
And corn was green on Carterhaugh,  
And flourish’d broad Blackandro’s oak,  
The aged Harper’s soul awoke !

Then would he sing achievements high,  
 And circumstance of chivalry,  
 Till the rapt traveller would stay,  
 Forgetful of the closing day;  
 And noble youths, the strain to hear,  
 Forsook the hunting of the deer;  
 And Yarrow, as he roll'd along,  
 Bore burden to the Minstrel's song."

There we find the quintessence of Scott's courtly minstrel talent; homage is paid to the lady, to the name of Buccleuch, to the fields and hills and waters of Buccleuch's domain, in which the clan's poet had a clansman's part; and over and above all, there is an inner significance, eloquent only to his intimates for whom he framed the tribute. For at this time Scott himself was purposed to acquire close to "Newark's tower" the little estate of Broadmeadows, on the bank of Yarrow, and so take up his modest abode under the shadow of his chieftain's stronghold.

A critic has asked if there was anything in Scott's poetry which Scott could not have given in prose; and at least one answer is provided by this passage and by a score of others in the poem. Never in prose did Scott achieve what he accomplished a hundred times in verse, this swinging chime of names, with the beauty of their sound artfully distributed to enhance the magic of their associations.

Another quality is shown, too, in the very first canto, when Scott describes with fervour the midnight ride from Branksome to Melrose. Here—but still more in later examples of his work—the battle of Flodden in *Marmion*, the stag hunt in the *Lady of the Lake*—Scott gets a speed into narrative that prose can never equal. Prose has the footman's pace; and his prose except where it was in dramatic dialogue, went like himself, strongly but slowly and ungracefully. But set him on the eight-syllabled couplet, and there was always galloping at command.

Yet when all is said, the first of Scott's main poems, which perhaps remains the most popular of all, is a fantastic improvisation, lacking as a whole in the high seriousness of

great work. Here is creation lavish yet unskilled, flinging its material about, and breaking now and then into real but not great poetry. He is less completely himself in it than elsewhere; all the scene at Melrose, where William of Deloraine is conducted to the tomb of Michael Scott, bears the stamp of German models. The discipleship to Coleridge has been already noted; and it should be observed that Scott was craftsman enough to reproduce with considerable fidelity the cadences of "Christabel" in his opening. But Coleridge used this loose rhythmic form under the guidance of an exquisite sensibility to the musical quality of language, which was very intermittent in Scott. And in truth after the opening stanzas of the *Lay*, the poet rides roughshod everywhere. All that he gets out of verse in the *Lay* is a strong pulsation, sometimes regular as the tramp of drilled men, sometimes exciting in its deliberate irregularity. Later in his career he attained to snatches of a finer music, but it was almost invariably when the voices of Scottish lyric poetry possessed his ear.—Yet in this poem are two of these exceptional excellences. One is the noble version of the "Dies Irae," on which the last canto of the *Lay* proper closes:

"That day of wrath, that dreadful day,  
When heaven and earth shall pass away,  
What power shall be the sinner's stay?  
How shall he meet that dreadful day?

When, shrivelling like a parched scroll,  
The flaming heavens together roll;  
When louder yet, and yet more dread,  
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead,

Oh! on that day, that wrathful day,  
When man to judgment wakes from clay,  
Be THOU the trembling sinner's stay,  
Though heaven and earth shall pass away!"

Another is a passage on which attention should be fixed. The story tells how the goblin page by magic brings Margaret

of Branksome's lover unseen into her bower. Here is the whole stanza :

“ Oft have I mus'd what purpose bad --  
 That foul malicious urchin had  
 To bring this meeting round ;  
 For happy love's a heavenly sight,  
 And by a vile malignant sprite  
 In such no joy is found ;  
 And oft I've deem'd perchance he thought  
 Their erring passion might have wrought  
 Sorrow, and sin, and shame ;  
 And death to Cranstoun's gallant Knight,  
 And to the gentle ladye bright  
 Disgrace and loss of fame.  
 But earthly spirit could not tell  
 The heart of them that lov'd so well.  
 True love's the gift which God has given  
 To man alone beneath the heaven :  
 It is not fantasy's hot fire,  
 Whose wishes, soon as granted, fly ;  
 It liveth not in fierce desire,  
 With dead desire it doth not die ;  
 It is the secret sympathy,  
 The silver link, the silken tie,  
 Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,  
 In body and in soul can bind.  
 Now leave we Margaret and her Knight,  
 To tell you of the approaching fight.”

It will be seen how incongruously and even inartistically Scott leads up to, and away from, this characterisation of “true love” ; and the more the poem is studied the more the incongruity of the passage appears.—For when Scott spoke of “minstrelsy,” and associated himself with the word “minstrel,” he had a true sense of the word's value. The minstrel was the poet of a lord, or a clan ; trained to express public sentiments for a public occasion ; to be the spokesman of a people, rather than to utter his own thought and his own inner feeling. There is nothing of the minstrel about Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* ; and even Wordsworth's noble sonnets on public affairs keep the individual note so strong that they are hardly

a minstrel's utterance. Cowper's *Toll for the Brave*, again, is noble minstrelsy; and yet it is like the utterance of one unused to be heard publicly—as if a monk were speaking at some high ceremony. But Scott is habitually of all poets the most impersonal, and when he is at his best, the lyrics tell you no more about him than do Shakespeare's about Shakespeare. Yet here, for once, in this passage of the *Lay* one feels that a man suddenly lets himself go. Here Scott speaks out that upon which all his life he was most reticent.

There, once for all, is his confession. Love to him is not the *έρως ἀνίκητε μάχην*—‘Love the unconquered, that fallest on the cattle, and by night dost couch thee on a maid's soft cheeks.’—Love for the Minstrel is not of the senses, not the universal impulse that Lucretius has celebrated; it is man's distinguishing attribute, no less than reason. To tell of it, words come to the poet from far back, with echoes of the cavalier poetry, when Lovelace and Montrose wrote of a love disciplined and durable. It has been shown already how deep a hold this passion took on Scott in his young age, and how it kept that hold. When the novels come to be considered, this declaration of faith must be remembered.

But from the first this most masculine of writers was in speech and in thought chaste. His hero had to be a lover; but he had to be a chaste lover. Nobody was more aware than Scott that (as W. D. Howells once put it) man, after centuries of civilisation, remains imperfectly monogamous; nobody was more qualified to know how much attention literature had devoted to the complications springing from this imperfection. He never preaches chastity in his novels; he can make his characters broadspoken at times, for, as his letters show, he was never mealy-mouthed; but he practises a deliberate avoidance of anything that may possibly incite to desire; and throughout the novels there is implicit that view of love between man and woman to which, for this once, in his first poem he gave fervent expression.

The passage is not one of his successes. It is not dramatically appropriate; and in mere point of style, it plunges from the artificial imitation of the balladist's vocabulary—

is Wardour Street English—to entirely modern utterance; whence it passes into an echo of the Seventeenth century; and finally scrambles back again to Scott's own natural style. Yet in the central lines there is no mistaking the passionate sincerity.

An equal earnestness, but far more felicitous in its expression, inspires the best known passage in this poem, or in any of his poems. This is the opening to the Sixth Canto, which really need not be quoted—the lines beginning,

“Breathes there the man, with soul so dead.”

and the following stanza :

“O Caledonia! stern and wild——”

But here the Minstrel, expanding his theme beyond the limits of his clan, is yet on a theme most proper to minstrelsy. It is rhetoric that can thrill us, even when we perceive that too hasty utterance leaves the feeling imperfectly matched with the words that should crystallise it for ever.

“Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,  
Land of the mountain and the flood,  
Land of my sires”

Nobody could better that; and the glow that is in this simplicity serves to carry us over the inferior work which follows, with words chosen merely because they rhyme.

“What mortal hand  
Can e'er untie the filial band  
That knits me to thy rugged strand!”

Yet, as we go on, as the passage flags, rallies, and wavers again; we are driven to scrutinise the earlier “band” and “strand,” and agree with Wordsworth when he said that Scott was “too careless.”

We get near to the best that he was to do in verse when the feast is set in the last canto and the minstrel recites a younger

minstrel's song.—“O, listen, listen, ladies gay,” is one of the things which all lovers of verse know more or less by heart; and Ruskin once praised, as only he could, a line in which Scott brought to the ballad form a modern touch of closely observed nature.

“The blackening wave is edg'd with white:  
To inch and rock the sea-mews fly.”

The first line gives a whole landscape in a flash, and the second (to borrow a phrase from Stevenson) “completes the innuendo of the scene.”

Again, the girl's answer to those who would stay her from attempting the stormy firth is perfect in all that it says and implies:—

“’Tis not because Lord Lindesay's heir  
To-night at Roslin leads the ball,  
But that my lady-mother there  
Sits lonely in her castle-hall.

’Tis not because the ring they ride,  
And Lindesay at the ring rides well,  
But that my sire the wine will chide,  
If ’tis not fill'd by Rosabelle.”

After this, however, Scott departs from the true tradition of the ballad, and indulges himself in a piece of fine writing out of key with the theme. One stanza, or two, at most, should have done what he does in seven. He had still to learn the art of leaving out; but he had learnt that well before he wrote the ballad of “Glenallan's Earl that fought at the Red Harlaw.”

Another passage should be noted, though it has no importance as poetry, When the mustering of Buccleuch's forces is recounted, “Auld Wat o' Harden,” grandfather to the modern minstrel's own great-grandfather, has a long stave to himself, his escutcheon, his lands, his deeds, his fair lady, the Flower of Yarrow, and the “five stately warriors” his sons. And with great skill of minstrel rhetoric, though the blazon, the lands, the lady, each as



they are mentioned identify the chief, yet the name of "Harden" is kept in reserve for the final couplet—the Gaelic *ceangal* or girthing, which binds all finally together.

This passage is one of a series, all fully appropriate and all kept well in the key of the poem; but in the recital of what led to this muster, something breaks out which as yet could find no proper scope in romantic verse. Wat Tinlinn, the Liddesdale yeoman, comes in with the tidings of Lord Howard's advance.

" They cross'd the Liddel at curfew hour  
And burn'd my little lonely tower:  
The fiend receive their souls therefore!  
It had not been burnt this year and more."

Icelandic prose sagas abound in the grim ironic humour which is in that last line—telling so much of border conditions; but it does not make its effect here. Humour fits better in William of Deloraine's answer to the Lady of Branksome when she charges him not to read the magic book:

" Safer by none may the errand be done,  
Than, noble dame, by me;  
Letter nor line know I never a one,  
Were't my neck-verse at Hairibee."

Indeed, there is a trace of humorous characterisation in the whole study of this bold mosstrooper, ending with the cattle-reiver's speech over the dead body of his foe:

" In all the northern counties here,  
Whose word is *Snaffle, spur, and spear*,  
Thou wert the best to follow gear!  
'Twas pleasure, as we look'd behind,  
To see how thou the chase could'st wind,  
Cheer the dark bloodhound on his way,  
And with the bugle rouse the fray!  
I'd give the land of Deloraine,  
Dark Musgrave were alive again."

The same quality comes into the picture of the English yeoman who captures the young Buccleuch—the best piece

of narrative in all the poem. But, broadly speaking, Scott found no use in his poems for his master faculty of humour. That is probably why they never contented him.

Perhaps the most significant facts in his literary history are these: that after the blazing and amazing success of his first poem he wrote no verse for more than a year; and that immediately on his return to Ashestiel after the *Lay* had captured the world, he set himself to write, not a poem but a prose romance of Scottish history and manners. The first seven chapters of *Waverley* were written in 1805, and shown to Erskine, the confidant on whom he most relied. But the scholarly lawyer headed him off from this new direction—not unnaturally, for these opening chapters show very little of the qualities by which Scott was to enchant the world; and the success already achieved with a partial employment of his powers was calculated to mislead his critics and himself as to where his strength lay. Yet evidently there was more bubbling and working in his mind than he could put into the vehicle of rhyme.—It should never be forgotten that, after his years of apprenticeship from 1798 to 1803 had led him to the brilliant achievement of a metrical romance, his own instinct pushed him next to a romance which should be written in prose—in which he probably felt already that he could accomplish something possessing more of the qualities which he really valued in literature.

For Scott never rated his own poetry higher than the most critical opinion rates it now. But that is no reason to believe that he undervalued the poetry of his prose romances.

## CHAPTER VII

### “MARMION”

1806-8

WHEN the first chapters of *Waverley* had been shoved aside into the drawer where they were to repose, forgotten, for five years, there was no other subject present to Scott's mind. Later, when he had found his true medium, material crowded in on him; before one novel was finished, the characters and incidents of another often jostled the outgoing pageant. He was a born storyteller, but the metrical romance never fitted his gift. There is no other way to account for the fact that at the height of his energies, with a flaming success to kindle his imagination, eighteen months, no less, went by before he began to work on his next poem.

There was indeed no reason why he should hurry. He had all the money he needed, and the assurance that he could make plenty more. But if he did not write, it was assuredly from no careful husbanding of a delicate vein. No writer was ever more prodigal, when the humour took him. He just had nothing in particular to say; and since he abhorred idleness, he found an occupation suited to his bookish tastes—and also an outlet for propensities that were strong in him. Many poets have been gamblers: Scott never went near a gaming table; indeed his novels show a rooted antipathy to this form of excitement. But sanguine imagination, mingled with interest in all the detail of practical life, made him, what Balzac also was, a speculator; and the hook was artistically feathered to lure him.

His advice to Ballantyne to start a printing-firm had been amply justified by success; Scott's schoolfellow and friend had acquired a widespread reputation for the excellence of his work, thanks to the most honourable form of advertisement. Nobody could fail to notice how handsomely the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* was turned out; and since the *Lay* was in all hands, booksellers and publishers flooded Ballantyne with orders. Yet in such cases money often goes out quicker than it comes in, and the printer was soon in difficulties, and applied to Scott for a loan.

It was not the first request, and an earlier loan had been made. Scott was too shrewd to like the idea of multiplying mere lendings. But he had capital at command—the capital with which he planned to buy Broadmeadows when it should come into the market; and he answered Ballantyne's letter with a proposal that he should strengthen the business with funds which would entitle him to a third share in the profits.—In point of fact, it would seem that Ballantyne brought in nothing but the types and presses, already burdened with debt.

It was so arranged; and thenceforward in all his agreements with publishers Scott stipulated that Ballantyne should do the printing. No one, except Erskine, knew, and no one guessed, that he had a direct interest in making this condition. It gave him also a direct interest, unseen, in finding publishers to undertake works which should be carried out at the Ballantyne Press.

The first of these proposed undertakings was no less than a complete edition of the British Poets. Constable, who was now passing from the stage of bookseller into that of publisher, accepted the scheme, on the footing that Scott should edit the whole. Thus the *Minstrel*, fresh from the success of his minstrelsy, is found proposing a piece of task work, to stretch over "at least a hundred volumes, to be published at the rate of ten a year"—with allowance to the editor of thirty guineas a volume.

The scheme did not go through; and in the upshot, Scott undertook only an edition of Dryden's Works;—but a complete edition, with a full biography. Plainly his outlook

t this time was to be not an imaginative writer but a man of letters.

"My present employment," he wrote to Ellis, "is an edition of John Dryden's works, which is already gone to press. As for riding on Pegasus, depend upon it, I shall never cross him more in a serious way, unless I should by some strange accident reside so long in the Highlands and make myself master of their ancient manners, as to paint them with some degree of accuracy in a kind of Companion to the Minstrel Lay."

In other words, since Erskine had headed him off the prose romance of the Highlands, which the world ultimately received in *Waverley*, he had thoughts of one in metre—and in a sense, this idea was at last carried out in the *Lady of the Lake*. But a passage in one of his letters to Miss Seward makes plain enough that the material of *Waverley* was still working in his mind—and also that he himself realised, better than anyone else, how great was the difference between the Gaelic Highlands and the hill country of the Border to whose English-speaking stock he belonged. He tells her of his views upon Macpherson's *Ossian*, on which he had been writing for the *Edinburgh* (for he was an active contributor to Jeffrey's *Review* in these years) and then he adds:

"I have had for some time thoughts of writing a Highland poem, somewhat in the style of the LAY, giving as far as I can a real picture of what that enthusiastic race actually were before the destruction of their patriarchal government. It is true, I have not quite the same facilities as in describing Border manners, where I am, as they say, more at home. But to balance my comparative deficiency in knowledge of Celtic manners, you are to consider that I have from my youth delighted in all the Highland traditions which I could pick up from the old Jacobites who used to frequent my father's house; and this will, I hope, make some amends for my having less immediate opportunities of research than in the Border tales."

The same letter ends with a passage of self-description that explains a biographer's difficulty in handling the life

of Walter Scott. He says that if possible he will come and pay his respects at Lichfield :

"And yet I should not do it in prudence. . . .

"You would expect to see a person who had dedicated himself much to literary pursuits, and you would find me a rattle-skulled half-lawyer, half-sportsman, through whose head a regiment of horse has been exercising since he was five years old; half-educated—half-crazy, as his friends sometimes tell him; half everything, but *entirely* Miss Seward's much obliged, affectionate, and faithful servant,

"WALTER SCOTT."

How, indeed, is one to set out this gentleman's activities? He was certainly not wholly dedicated to literary pursuits; and yet, over and above as much writing in the *Edinburgh* as would fill a volume, he had, between the summer of 1805 and the New Year of 1808 not only written *Marmion* but prepared for the press his *Dryden* in eighteen volumes. And this was no scamped work: "one of the best edited books in the language," says Professor Saintsbury.

Scott's correspondence on the subject has some characteristic flashes. Ellis wanted an expurgated edition. Scott answered :

I will not castrate John Dryden. I would as soon castrate my own father, as I believe Jupiter did of yore. What would you say to any man who would castrate Shakespeare, or Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher?

"At the same time," he admits later, "I am not at all happy when I peruse some of Dryden's comedies; they are very stupid as well as indelicate." And (a year later) he concludes that "After all there are some passages in his translations from Ovid and Juvenal that will scarcely bear repeating . . . They are not only double-entendres but single-entendres—not only broad, but long, and coarse as the mainsail of a first-rate."—In the end, however, he printed the full text.

Yet, was the man of letters in Walter Scott more important than the sportsman? Writing (again to Ellis) he owns

to "a horror of pen and ink with which this country in fine weather regularly affects me. In recompense, I ride, walk, fish, course, eat and drink with might and main from morning to night."

That was the way of life at Ashestiel when Scott was five-and-thirty. What he offered Ellis was "mountain mutton at 4 p.m., goats' whey at 6 a.m." The house was small but elastic. "Ten people fill it at any time" he wrote to Joanna Baillie, "and I remember its lodging thirty-two without any complaint. I cannot relinquish my Border principle of accommodating all the cousins and duniwastles who will rather sleep on chairs and on the floor and in the hayloft than be absent when folks are gathered together."

In his own amusements, riding came first. He always fed his own horses, and one of his chargers, Brown Adam, would let no other person on his back, and broke the leg of one groom and the arm of another when they tried it. But when he was bridled and saddled, the door would be thrown open and he would trot out to the leaping-on-stone, which Scott, being lame, had to use, and would stand like a rock till his master was settled in the saddle; then he would permit himself to express his feelings by neighings and such curvettings as disturbed the patience of James Hogg.

Walking was no hindrance to Scott's work, for, apart from what he observed, he composed a great deal out of doors; for that matter, riding was no hindrance either at times; rather, he used it to whip up his mood. "Oh, man, I had many a grand gallop among these braes when I was thinking of *Marmion*," he said to Lockhart, on the ride from Ashestiel to Newark, "but a trotting canny pony must serve me now."

Another glory of those early days at Ashestiel was fording the river; for in those days, bridge there was none for miles. In August 1805, a flood came so fierce that it washed away the whole bank of gravel and rock which made the river fordable, and it had to be filled in by all hands. Scott was the first to attempt the crossing, and he was almost immediately beyond his depth, but his trooper swam the deep swift stream steadily.

As to fishing, the Tweed was at hand; yet an angler has to admit that Scott writes with more enthusiasm of "burning the water" than of any method which would now be considered legitimate. Tom Purdie was the expert angler of Scott's establishment. No angler could refrain from retelling a story told by one of Scott's guests who went trout-fishing below Ashestiel—Scott attending. Something heavy was hooked, so heavy that it was presumed to be a salmon; but it proved to be the biggest trout that had for years been taken in that part of Tweed. Tom Purdie later came on the scene and after exchange of compliments withdrew, but was seen slyly to kick the captured monster. "Deil was in the brute," he said, "to let himself be caught by the like of *him frae Lunnon*."

There is no mention of shooting, though the letter to Ellis was written in October; and in November 1809, Scott says, "I have quite laid aside the gun." But coursing was a constant amusement which he never gave up; he loved too well to see his dogs enjoy themselves.

At this time Camp the bull terrier was the household dog, the companion to whom Scott always spoke as he would to a man; but there was a pair of greyhounds, Douglas and Percy, and the study window was always open so that they could leap in or out as they liked. They were the effective winners of hare soup, a great item in the fare at Ashestiel. Coursing was done for the most part on horseback, a line of riders covering the hillside. When Scott's son was asked if he knew why all the people who came to see them made such a work about his father, there was no doubt in the boy's mind. "It's mostly him that sees the hare sitting."

It remains to take account of the "half-lawyer", who was not much in evidence outside Edinburgh. But in town or country, one could never forget the "regiment of cavalry" spoken of in his self-portrait. In 1805 Lord Moira was appointed to command-in-chief in Scotland, and quickened greatly the volunteering enthusiasm. There was a whole campaign of field days, and the Edinburgh Light Horse were deeply engaged. Later in the year, Scott went to



the Lake Country; and after he had climbed Helvide, in company with Wordsworth and Sir Humphry Main he and his wife went to Gilsland, and were enjoying themselves at the watering-place where they first met. Suddenly rumour spread far and wide that the French were gained to land in Scotland. Scott had made the journey riding beside his wife's carriage; he saddled his trooper and within twenty-four hours reached the mustering-place of the Border country at Dalkeith—a full hundred miles away. As he rode, beacons were ablaze on the border heights, as in the days that he had described in the *Lay*, when a Warden raid was impending; and when he reached the muster, he found that though the alarm was a false one, yet the Borderers from Ettrick Forest had turned out as fast as ever their ancestors had done.

Since Scott was passionately a loyalist, in time of a great war, it seemed to him easy and natural to ask a modest favour of Pitt's Government which he supported with enthusiasm. Feeling that the bar did not tempt him, and also believing that his success as a poet injured his chances as an advocate—since no one would give a brief to the author of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*—he set his mind on securing a moderately paid post, one of the Clerkships of Session. None was vacant; but Mr. Home, an old friend of Scott's family, had held his for over thirty years. There was no pension attached to these posts, and the usual course was that a man should agree to the appointment of a coadjutor who would help in the work for a share of the salary. Scott proposed to take all the work, and leave Mr. Home all the salary for his lifetime. Mr. Home very naturally accepted; the transfer was agreed to before Pitt's death; but after the change of Government it appeared that the deed had been carelessly drawn, so that if Scott happened to die before Mr. Home, Mr. Home would lose his interest in the post. It was therefore necessary for the Tory lawyer to secure the consent of the Whig government to what the Tories had approved; and Scott went to London to see about it. Lord Spencer, then at the Home Office, granted his request as

matter of justice, but said he would have been glad to take it as a favour. Everybody was kind, and Scott, once invited, now felt himself free to go and dine at Holland House, which he had before avoided, lest it should seem like Scott's Whig interest.

He came back to Edinburgh and took up the Clerk's duties, neither laborious nor interesting, which for the rest of his life occupied him for four or five hours daily during nearly half of each year. But this work kept him in touch with the practice of the law—for it was part of his duty to reduce the findings which the Court delivered by word of mouth into written technical shape; also, it made him a constant spectator at the rather squalid pageant of human life which passes before any legal tribunal.

It cannot be fairly said that he owed his appointment to a Whig Ministry; Mr. Fox's colleagues could not without flagrant injustice have done other than they did. But we have to admit that he can be blamed for a manifestation of rancorous partisanship against men who had at least treated him with high courtesy.

Lord Melville, to whom he was bound by many ties, had been impeached by the new Government, and was acquitted by his peers. Even Lockhart, anything but a Whig, does not think that the impeached man came out with flying colours. But the Edinburgh Tories gave a public dinner in honour of the event, and Scott wrote a song, which was sung by James Ballantyne. Its last lines ran,

" In Grenville and Spencer  
And some few good men, sir,  
High talents we honour, slight difference forgive;  
But the Brewer we'll hoax,  
Tallyho to the Fox,  
And drink Melville for ever, as long as we live! "

Only those who remember a war that made sharp political division in the country will understand how acrid both feeling and expression become at such a time; and it is to be noted that Canning, of all men, wrote and complimented Scott upon this effusion. But it is clear that, during

the Whigs' brief tenure of power, Scott seriously believed the constitution and the country to be in danger. Lockhart tells how after a political debate at the Faculty of Advocates, in which Scott had spoken with unusual fervour and fluency, Jeffrey and some others of his Whig friends walked away with him and began to talk over the discussion in terms of chaff. But Scott broke out on them that it was no laughing matter. "Little by little, whatever your wishes may be, you will destroy and undermine, until nothing of what remains of Scotland shall remain." And with that he turned away from them, and Jeffrey saw tears running down his cheek. Warden must be,

All this should be borne in mind when we consider the *Marmion*; for probably all that is vital in the poem draws its continued force from Scott's passion of patriotism. Take *Marmion* as a romance of mediæval times, and few now will be found to care for it. But it would be stupid not to recognise that it still gave genuine delight to thousands half a century after it was written; and basely ungrateful to forget that in a grave crisis of his country's fortunes Scott captured the public imagination with verse which was fit to put courage into the faint-hearted.

In the earlier part of the famous passage which describes the story of Flodden Field, the wounded leader's death-scene, and Clara's charity, even the lines on "Woman! in our hours of ease, uncertain, coy and hard to please"—even Marmion's dying shout—now seem tarnished and artificial. But the combined imagination and knowledge which pictured the last stages of the actual historic battle still keep their potency: Scott's passion for courage, intensified by desire to show his country magnificent even in defeat, thrills us when we read how

"The stubborn spear-men still made good  
Their dark impenetrable wood,  
Each stepping where his comrade stood,  
The instant that he fell."

Even more wonderful as a piece of writing are the lines which tell how at nightfall Surrey withdrew his army,

and only then did the remnant of those stubborn fighters know their loss.

" Their King, their Lords, their mightiest low,  
 They melted from the field, as snow,  
 When streams are swoln and south winds blow  
 Dissolves in silent dew.  
 Tweed's echoes heard the ceaseless plash,  
 While many a broken band,  
 Disorder'd, through her currents dash,  
 To gain the Scottish land;  
 To town and tower, to town and dale,  
 To tell red Flodden's dismal tale,  
 And raise the universal wail.  
 Tradition, legend, tune, and song,  
 Shall many an age that wail prolong:  
 Still from the sire the son shall hear  
 Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,  
 Of Flodden's fatal field,  
 Where shiver'd was fair Scotland's spear,  
 And broken was her shield!"

One has to note in *Marmion*, as in the *Lay*, lyrics inset, which live in all the Anthologies. "Where shall the lover rest," is less Scottish in its accent than most of the others; but "the Young Lochinvar" is a true offshoot of Border Minstrelsy. Yet no border minstrel before Scott ever gave to his verse that galloping cadence.

But the passages of special interest for criticism and for biography are those by which—as in the *Lay*—the main narrative is interrupted. Yet in the *Lay* two fictions were intertwined, and personal compliments only came in by implication; in *Marmion*, Scott breaks his story with moralising and complimentary epistles addressed to his friends. From one of these, the description of his own childhood has already been quoted; but the first, which opens with an autumnal picture of his surroundings at Ashestiel, is not so universally known. There are few finer examples of his power to describe nature, singling out the significant details.

" November's sky is chill and drear,  
 November's leaf is red and sear ;

Late, gazing down the steepy linn,  
That hems our little garden in,  
Low in its dark and narrow glen  
You scarce the rivulet might ken,  
So thick the tangled greenwood grew,  
So feeble trill'd the streamlet through:  
Now, murmuring hoarse, and frequent seen  
Through bush and brier, no longer green,  
An angry brook, it sweeps the glade,  
Brawls over rock and wild cascade,  
And, foaming brown with doubled speed,  
Hurries its waters to the Tweed.

No longer Autumn's glowing red  
Upon our Forest hills is shed;  
No more beneath the evening beam  
Fair Tweed reflects their purple gleam;  
Away hath' pass'd the heather-bell  
That bloom'd so rich on Needpathfell;  
Sallow his brow; and russet bare  
Are now the sister-heights of Yair.

The sheep, before the pinching heaven,  
To shelter'd dale and down are driven,  
Where yet some faded herbage pines,  
And yet a watery sunbeam shines:  
In meek despondency they eye  
The wither'd sward and wintry sky,  
And far beneath their summer hill,  
Stray sadly by Glenkinnon's rill:  
The shepherd shifts his mantle's fold,  
And wraps him closer from the cold;  
His dogs no merry circles wheel,  
But shivering follow at his heel;  
A cowering glance they often cast,  
As deeper moans the gathering blast."

From this gloom of the year the poet passes with felicitous transition to the public sadness of "my country's wintry state." The lines upon Nelson, the long passage upon Pitt and Fox, are too well known to be easily judged, and yet are hardly of the quality that can defy being too well known. But their eloquence is much more disciplined and masculine than any in the *Lay*; it is eloquence confident

in its power to command audience: and it is eloquence proper to poetry.

Is it great poetry?

The lines on Nelson must be quoted, for in them Scott achieves what rarely came to him, a suggestion in the sound of the words and the movement of the rhythm, answering to or echoing what he described.

"To him, as to the burning levin,  
Short, bright, resistless course was given.  
Where'er his country's foes were found,  
Was heard the fated thunder's sound,  
Till burst the bolt on yonder shore,  
Roll'd, blaz'd, destroy'd—and was no more."

Seldom indeed has so much been conveyed in a verse of eight syllables as in the last of these.

Again, later, in the quatrain which ends the second stave in his praise of Pitt, is there not heard what a fine writer once called "the high tremulous note of great verse"?

"Now is the stately column broke,  
The beacon-light is quench'd in smoke,  
The trumpet's silver sound is still,  
The warder silent on the hill!"

Or finally, consider the closing and conjoint laudation of the two statesmen

"With more than mortal powers endow'd,  
How high they soar'd above the crowd!  
Theirs was no common party race,  
Jostling by dark intrigue for place;  
Like fabled Gods, their mighty war  
Shook realms and nations in its jar;  
Beneath each banner proud to stand,  
Look'd up the noblest of the land,  
Till through the British world were known  
The names of Pitt and Fox alone.  
Spells of such force no wizard grave  
E'er fram'd in dark Thessalian cave,  
Though his could drain the ocean dry  
And force the planets from the sky.

These spells are spent, and, spent with these,  
 The wine of life is on the lees;  
 Genius, and taste, and talent gone,  
 For ever tomb'd beneath the stone  
 Where—taming thought to human pride!—  
 The mighty chiefs sleep side by side.  
 Drop upon Fox's grave the tear,  
 'Twill trickle to his rival's bier;  
 O'er Pitt's the mournful requiem sound,  
 And Fox's shall the notes rebound.  
 The solemn echo seems to cry,  
 ' Here let their discord with them die,  
 Speak not for those a separate doom,  
 Whom Fate made Brothers in the tomb,  
 But search the land of living men,  
 Where wilt thou find their like agen? ' "

Let us admit that in the last ten lines the noble eloquence passes into something more ingenious and rhetorical; yet is it any wonder that such writing found passionate acceptance throughout three kingdoms?

The second epistle is addressed to the Reverend John Marriott, who had often hunted with the poet by Ettrick and by Yarrow; and it has no passage of special merit. But one should note the tribute to the owners of Bowhill, who were then in England. Lament for their absence carries its glowing praise of Lady Dalkeith:

" She is gone, whose lovely face  
 Is but her least and lowest grace."

But other neighbours had their share in the pleasure of receiving such compliments: Scott lamented that the "long descended lord of Yair" with his two sons, "companions of my mountain joys," had also forsaken that countryside. The lines recall how in their walks he showed the boys the mound which Wallace had defended and taught them to think of it as "holy ground"; and how their faces lit up till his own caught a glow from them. That was a privileged family, and they knew it. When *Marmion* was published, Mr. Pringle of Yair wrote that he wished

Scott "could have witnessed the countenances of my little flock grouped round your book."

The third epistle, addressed to Erskine, has the account of his upbringing, but also makes retort to this scholar's constant urging of classic models.

"For me, thus nurtur'd, dost thou ask,  
The classic poet's well-conn'd task?  
Nay, Erskine, nay; on the wild hill  
Let the wild heath-bell flourish still;  
Cherish the tulip, prune the vine,  
But freely let the woodbine twine,  
And leave untrimm'd the eglantine."

The fourth, to Skene of Rubislaw, recalls their summer country excursions, when Skene would be sketching, and Scott spelling over some old legend while the rival dogs—

"Pandour and Camp, with eyes of fire,  
Jealous, each other's motions view'd,  
And scarce suppress'd their ancient feud."

It recalled also winter nights in Edinburgh when

"He was held a laggard soul,  
Who shunn'd to quaff the sparkling bowl,"

and when there was much laughing and talk of horses and horsemanship and of the field-day or the drill.

Ellis receives the fifth Epistle, written in Edinburgh "when dark December glooms the day," and it is chiefly in praise of Scott's native city. The sixth is to Heber and written from Mertoun House, Scott of Harden's home, where the poet (to Hogg's disapproval) renewed at Christmas time the memory of vassalage.

This is how it looked to the Minstrel himself:

"Still linger, in our northern clime,  
Some remnants of the good old time;  
And still, within our valleys here,  
We hold the kindred title dear,



Even when, perchance, its far-fetch'd claim  
 To Southron ear sounds empty name;  
 For course of blood, our proverbs deem,  
 Is warmer than the mountain-stream.  
 And thus, my Christmas still I hold  
 Where my great-grandsire came of old,  
 With amber beard, and flaxen hair,  
 And reverend apostolic air—  
 The feast and holy-tide to share,  
 And mix sobriety with wine,  
 And honest mirth with thoughts divine:  
 Small thought was his, in after time  
 E'er to be hitch'd into a rhyme.  
 The simple sire could only boast,  
 That he was loyal to his cost;  
 The banish'd race of kings rever'd,  
 And lost his land—but kept his beard."

A consideration of these epistles shows that the poem was being rapidly written in its latter stages. The first introductory epistle fixes itself to November 1806, and the fourth to November 1807.

"That same November gale once more  
 Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow's shore."

December saw the composition of the fifth Canto and of the opening to the sixth; and on January 19th 1808, Scott wrote to Lady Louisa Stuart, perhaps the most characteristic of all his observations about his own work:

"Marmion is, at this instant, gasping upon Flodden Field, and there I have been obliged to leave him for these few days in the death pangs. I hope I shall find time enough this morning to knock him on the head with two or three thumping stanzas."

There was not much trace of the robe and fillet about this off-hand bard.

A month later, on February 23rd, the poem was published, with a mass of antiquarian notes. Ellis had implored him "not to forget the hobby-horse." Scott, sending his presentation of the "dumpy quarto" and calling

attention to the opening of the Fifth Canto, which was the epistle addressed to Ellis himself, adds :

"One thing I am sure you will admit, and that is, that—'the hobby-horse is *not* forgot'; nay, you will see I have paraded in my Introductions a plurality of hobby-horses—a whole stud, on each of which I have, in my day, been accustomed to take an airing."

In short, the whole poem is inspired by enjoyment, and the desire to give pleasure. With the exception of a few passages, the romance itself lacks any high seriousness of intention; but the poem as a whole is a monument to the friendships of a man, whose first use of fame was, so far as in him lay, to make offerings to his friends.—There was no happier period than this in Scott's life, and Lockhart says that to the end of his days he loved to recall the places about Ashestiel where he had written certain passages of *Marmion*.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LIFE AT ASHESTIEL; AND THE LADY OF THE LAKE

1809-11

IF one could consider only the history of Scott's poetic work, it would be simple indeed to sketch the last of his years at Ashestiel from the publication of *Marmion*, in 1808, till 1812, when he made his move to Abbotsford. There would be the completion and publication of the *Lady of the Lake*, the project of the *Lord of the Isles*, and the all-but-completion of *Rokeby*. But in Scott's actual life for this period, these compositions played a minor part. Even after *Marmion*, though he was definitely determined to count on his pen as a main source, he sought to employ it rather in work that could not be called creative.

As soon as the Dryden was out, he accepted a contract from Constable to produce a similar edition of Swift. The pay was handsome—£1,500 as against £750 for Dryden; and Swift, like Dryden, had always been one of Scott's favourite authors. But this time, even more than with Dryden, a huge mass of political reading was involved, extending over nearly half a century. If that had stood alone! He must needs undertake also the editing of Sir Ralph Sadler's State Papers and of Somers' Tracts. Ellis had remonstrated. "Surely the best poet of the age ought not to be incessantly employed with the drudgeries of literature." "These," Scott replied airily, "are neither toilsome nor exhausting labours." Yet Sadler made three large volumes, and Somers—not finished till 1812—no

less than thirteen, all of which had to be seen in the press, and elucidated.

"But," said he to Ellis, "my health is strong, and my mind active. I will, therefore, do as much as I can with justice to the tasks I have undertaken, and rest when advanced age and more independent circumstances entitle me to repose."

It should be remembered that the Clerkship of Session at this time occupied him as much as at any other, but that it brought him no money. Old Mr. Home, who had resigned the post on the basis of keeping the entire salary, lived on as gentlemen only do in such circumstances; and for five years Scott worked from four to six hours daily during half the year for nothing. He needed to supplement his income; and he took what offered, and what he could do without forcing himself against the gain. What Ellis called "the drudgeries of literature" seemed to him worth doing for themselves, for they diffused knowledge, and the work interested him. On the other hand, his nature rebelled against writing poetry simply because there was a demand for it. What he wrote to Ellis in jesting phrase (on October 5th, 1808) was seriously meant.

"I have done with poetry for some time—it is a scourging crop, and ought not to be hastily repeated. Editing, therefore, may be considered as a good crop of turnips or peas, extremely useful for those whose circumstances do not admit of their giving their farm a summer fallow."

This was indeed, as every brain-worker knows, sound common sense, and Scott did not overrate the strength which permitted him to make the choice he did. It was not only strength of body that he needed. When he moved to Ashestiel, and became, for a considerable part of the year, a liver in the country, he altered his whole way of working, by a most unusual exertion of self-discipline.

Previously, he had been in the habit of sitting up to write after the household went to bed; this brought on headaches, and he adopted new habits which he main-

## LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

through all his life in the country. Lockhart describes them minutely:

"He rose by five o'clock, lit his own fire when the season required one, and shaved and dressed with great deliberation—for he was a very martinet as to all but the mere coxcomberies of the toilet, not abhorring effeminate dandyism itself so cordially as the slightest approach to personal slovenliness, or even those 'bed-gown and slipper tricks,' as he called them, in which literary men are so apt to indulge. Arrayed in his shooting jacket or whatever dress he meant to use till dinner time, he was seated at his desk by six o'clock, all his papers arranged before him in the most accurate order, and his books of reference marshalled around him on the floor, while at least one favourite dog lay watching his eye, just beyond the line of circumvallation. Thus, by the time the family assembled for breakfast between nine and ten, he had done enough (in his own language) '*to break the neck of the day's work.*' After breakfast, a couple of hours more were given to his solitary tasks, and by noon he was, as he used to say, 'his own man.' When the weather was bad he would labour incessantly all the morning; but the general rule was to be out and on horseback by one o'clock at the latest; while, if any more distant excursion had been proposed overnight, he was ready to start on it by ten; his occasional rainy days of unintermitted study forming, as he said, a fund in his favour, out of which he was entitled to draw for accommodation whenever the sun shone with special brightness."

On this basis, he was able to get through prodigious quantities of the labour which did not exhaust his faculties. Poetry asked something more; an originating impulse—but the editing work lay there to be done, and he could switch his mind on to it at pleasure.

Also, though at the time he probably never suspected it, he was taking in supplies. Political tracts are dry reading, but a brain like Scott's seized upon human details, traits of manners, instances of conduct, and in after years the novelist drew on this store. Sadler could give him contemporary opinion and news-mongering about the reigns of Mary of Scotland and Elizabeth of England; where Dr. Dryasdust would have accumulated dead lumber, Scott seized on means to make dry bones live.—Yet it was

a formidable entanglement of engagements, and more than money tempted him into it. When Lockhart long after spoke to him of it:

“‘Ay,’ he said, ‘it was enough to tear me to pieces, but there was a wonderful exhilaration about it all: my blood was kept at fever-pitch. I felt as if I could have grappled with anything and everything; then, there was hardly one of all my schemes that did not afford me the means of serving some poor devil of a brother author. There were always huge piles of materials to be arranged, sifted, and indexed—volumes of extracts to be transcribed—journeys to be made hither and thither, for ascertaining little facts and dates—in short, I could commonly keep half-a-dozen of the ragged regiment of Parnassus in tolerable ease.’ I said he must have felt something like what a locomotive engine on a railway might be supposed to do, when a score of coal waggons are seen linking themselves to it the moment it gets the steam up, and it rushes on its course regardless of the burden. ‘Yes,’ said he, laughing, and making a crashing cut with his axe (for we were felling larches); ‘but there was a cursed lot of dung-carts too.’”

But in truth, no matter what he had on his back, Scott must always stop to lift a lame dog over a stile; it will be seen that he lifted more than one when he himself was limping badly. Yet at this time in the full powers of his prime, it is not to be believed that simple straightforward work ever hurt Walter Scott—if it ever hurt any man.

But worry is the worker's poison—grit in the wheels of a powerful machine; and in 1809 Scott, who had already prepared the ground for worries by his partnership with Ballantyne, doubled the area in which they could germinate. He knew that his peace of mind depended on other men's discretion and conduct in a sphere which he could not properly control; yet once again, good-nature and the desire to serve a friend, were largely responsible for his taking a new risk; and once again the itch for speculation helped.

James Ballantyne's younger brother, John, had been marked out to carry on the business of his father's shop in Kelso, and was sent to London for training. He came back, and was put in charge of one department in this miscellaneous establishment; and the department went

to pieces. His brother James offered the unsuccessful shopkeeper a post as accountant at £200 a year in the printing works. Scott, as James's partner, formally agreed; and the more he saw of the two brothers the more he liked them—but particularly John, who was amusing company, and a most accomplished and impassioned sportsman.

Constable, who had published *Marmion*, and who was publishing the *Swift*, had by this time become one of the leading men in his trade; but the chief pillar of his business was the *Edinburgh Review*, which then had the field to itself, and was taken in by educated readers of all parties, in spite of its Whig opinions—which Scott detested. Jeffrey's review of *Marmion* had been sharply critical and, naturally enough, Scott had not been pleased. Moreover, the *Review's* Whiggishness so far repelled him that he ceased to write for it. But in October 1808, there appeared an article on the Peninsular struggle which so offended Scott by its leaning towards Napoleon that he wrote to Constable:

“The ‘*Edinburgh Review*’ had become such as to render it impossible for me to continue a contributor to it. Now, it is such as I can no longer continue to receive or read it.”

Added to this was a personal quarrel between Scott and one of Constable's partners, who had spoken in a way which Scott resented about the agreement for the *Swift*.

John Murray, first of the dynasty—then a young and enterprising publisher—smelt trouble, came up north and got in touch with Ballantyne, from whom he found that Scott's discontent, political and personal, had led to two schemes. Murray came on to Ashestiel to discuss them.

It was proposed, first, to set up, as a branch of the printing business, a new publishing house in Edinburgh, under the charge of John Ballantyne. Secondly, it was proposed to bring out an *Edinburgh Annual Register* which should be a local Tory rival to the account and review of politics given in the *Edinburgh Review*. To these projects, both hostile to Constable's ascendancy, Murray added a

third. He solicited Scott's help in establishing a Tory quarterly, which Gifford should edit.

Scott—always a fighting man—thought this “a good plot, good friends, and full of expectation—an excellent plot, very good friends.” So he wrote to Ellis, bidding him “remember his swashing blow,” and take a hand in the good work. He wrote also to Gifford a long and admirable letter indicating the lines which should be followed, and offering help of all sorts. There is no need to say that the *Quarterly*, as it came eventually to be called, proved a formidable rival to the *Edinburgh* and justified the great exertions which Scott made to help in launching it.

John Murray was a sound man to back: John Ballantyne was a horse of another colour—and of very different staying power. But the firm of John Ballantyne and Co., booksellers, Edinburgh, was duly launched, Scott contributing half the capital as his own share—and lending another fourth to be the share of James. Also, the *Edinburgh Annual Register* was duly announced.

The publishing house got a noble send-off, for the *Lady of the Lake*, issued in May 1810, went as well as the others. Scott received two thousand guineas as author, and was of course entitled to half the publishers' profits as well; but how these internal arrangements worked out is past discovery. On the other hand, if the poet was the Ballantynes' blessing, he was also their bane; he must be held responsible for having entrusted an edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays to Henry Weber, an impecunious German, who had done some drudgery for him; and this went very wrong. Again, Dr. John Jamison, a learned old friend of Scott, had written a book on the History of the Culdees, about whom so little is known that even Lockhart entirely misdescribes these primitive devotees of the Celtic Church. Scott pressed for its publication; and not unnaturally the bulky tome did not sell. Financially, it was not even a coal cart.

Then the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, announced to appear twice yearly, was a worry also; for Scott was



pledged to keep it going. Southey acted as editor for its historical side—and it was certainly a pleasure for Scott to put money into Southey's purse; he thoroughly liked and esteemed that good Tory man of letters. But it was a deal of print to provide yearly, and Scott shared in the responsibility for providing, and not even his name could make it sell. However, in his private capacity, he prospered exceedingly. Literature apart, his *Old Man of the Sea* was lifted off his shoulders—without even being killed, for Mr. Home became pensionable and Scott succeeded, so that he had a fixed annual salary of £1,600 a year from January 1812, onwards, over and above his private property, his wife's income and his literary earnings. On the other hand, as partner in the bookselling firm, he saw liabilities mounting up against him.

None the less, trouble never came to Walter Scott in the Ashiestiel days; at least, not the trouble that is worry. It was of course a sore trouble in a way, when Camp died. The dog had been house-ridden for long, and could not follow his master riding; but every day when the cloth was being laid for dinner, the servant would say, "Camp, the Shirra's coming home by the ford," or "coming home by the hill," and Camp would go out by the back door to the river, or front door to the bridge over the burn, and meet his master. It was in Edinburgh that he died, about January 1809, and he was buried in the garden opposite the window where Scott used to sit writing. Scott's eldest daughter could remember the whole family standing out in the moonlight, as Scott himself levelled the sod over Camp "with the saddest expression of face she had ever seen in him." Scott was to have dined out that day, but sent an apology on account of the death of a "a dear old friend."

There was black trouble, too, about Scott's youngest brother, Daniel, who, after failure in business, went to the West Indies where Ellis, at Scott's request, got him some employment. He did no good there, but the final disgrace was one which Walter Scott could not pardon. Sent out

to serve against some negro mutineers, he showed cowardice so discredibly that he was shipped home. His mother took him in, and he died young; but Walter Scott would neither speak to him living, nor wear mourning for him dead. Twenty years later, the *Fair Maid of Perth* was written, which attempts to make the case for a failure in courage; and Scott told Lockhart that he meant a sort of expiation. "I have now learned to have more tolerance and compassion than I had in those days."

The other brother, Thomas, who cost him much trouble and expense, never had a hard word from his elder; though for his sake Scott was involved in a quarrel with a friend.

As Clerk of the Session, he had the power to appoint certain subordinates, and one of these, posts, carrying a salary of £400, fell vacant. His brother was eligible, and was in financial distress; but Scott thought it fair to promote a man who had long served in the office. But he appointed Thomas Scott to this man's place at £250. The duties could be, and often had been, discharged by deputy, and when Thomas Scott was obliged to flee from his creditors to the Isle of Man, it was so arranged, till a composition should be made with the creditors. But meanwhile a Commission of Judicature decided to abolish this post amongst others—recommending a scheme of compensation for the men discharged. Under this, Thomas Scott stood to receive about £130 a year. The Bill embodying this proposal was brought by the Tory Government to the House of Lords in 1810, and there the Whig peers fell on its provisions, singling out this case as a job, and emphasising the connection with the poet. Lord Holland spoke and voted in this sense; but the clause passed. Walter Scott's view was that his brother lost £250 a year which no power but an Act of Parliament could have taken from him, and that, far from being over-compensated, he was a sufferer; and he wrote to his brother that when Lord Holland was in Edinburgh, at an accidental meeting, "I remembered his part in your affair and cut him with as little remorse as an old pen." He firmly

believed that Holland had spoken out of Whig partisanship to hurt a prominent Tory.

It must not be forgotten that although Scott was good-natured and lovable beyond all ordinary measure, he was also fierce. Hogg, who knew him well, always declared that Colonel Mannering was an exact portrait of the author; and the Colonel is not represented as having an easy temper.

It is pleasant to turn from these to the happier memories of Ashiestiel and its period. The children were a great and growing joy; for Scott was one of the men who had no care for babies, but loved the young from the puppy stage onward. They ran in and out of his study like the dogs, but, unlike the dogs, they were allowed to interrupt and demand a story in the middle of his writing. He taught the boys himself when they were in the country, and owns that Walter, the eldest, yawned over his Latin till the teacher's own jaws "ached in sympathy." On Sunday, the Shirra read "English printed prayers" to his family, and not a few neighbours preferred to take this instead of kirk-going. No horses were allowed out that day, but the family (and dogs) walked after the Sunday reading to some favourite spot—generally near the ruined tower of Elibank—and picnicked there out-of-doors. If it was a wet day, he told them stories taken from the Bible which, as Lockhart says, he knew by heart; and indeed, the Waverley Novels prove it.

Then there was the care of the place—the forestry, in which he was assiduous, though he planted as well as farmed for his cousin's profit. He wrote to Joanna Baillie in 1810:

"The planting and cultivation of trees always seemed to me the most interesting occupation of the country. I cannot enter into the spirit of common vulgar farming, though I am doomed to carry on, in a small extent, that losing trade. It never occurred to me to be a bit more happy because my turnips were better than my neighbours; and as for *grieving* (over-seeing) my shearers, as we very emphatically term it in Scotland, I am

always too happy to get out of the way, that I may hear them laughing at a distance when on the harvest rigg.

“So every servant takes his course,  
And bad at first, they all grow worse.”

“I mean for the purposes of agriculture—for my hind shall kill a salmon, and my plough-boy find a hare sitting, with any man in the Forest. But planting and pruning trees I could work at from morning till night; and if ever my poetical revenues enable me to have a few acres of my own, that is one of the principal pleasures I look forward to. There is, too, a sort of self-congratulation, a little tickling self-flattery in the idea that, while you are pleasing and amusing yourself, you are seriously contributing to the future welfare of the country, and that your very acorn may send its future ribs of oak to future victories like Trafalgar.”

Over and above all this, there was the growing fame which he was not so morose as to refuse enjoying. In 1809 he went to London, staying as usual with French Huguenot refugees, the Dumergues, friends of his wife, through whom, then and thereafter, he came to know many French people. But he saw much this time of his newly-made friend, Morritt, whose house was in Portland Place, and who says:

“During this sojourn of 1809, the homage paid him would have turned the head of any less-gifted man of eminence. It neither altered his opinions, nor produced the affectation of despising it; on the contrary, he received it, cultivated it, and repaid it in its own coin. ‘All this is very flattering,’ he would say, ‘and very civil; and if people are amused with hearing me tell a parcel of old stories, or recite a pack of ballads to lovely young girls and gaping matrons, they are easily pleased, and a man would be very ill-natured who would not give pleasure so cheaply conferred.’ If he dined with us and found any new faces, ‘Well, do you want me to play lion to-day?’ was his usual question—‘I will roar if you like it to your heart’s content.’ He would, indeed, in such cases put forth all his inimitable powers of entertainment—and day after day surprised me by their unexpected extent and variety. Then, as the party dwindled, and we were left alone, he laughed at himself, quoted, ‘Yet know that I one Snug the joiner am—no lion fierce,’ etc. —and was at once himself again.”

But the pleasantest of Scott's days were always spent in Scotland; and in the summer of 1809, when the Courts rose, he took his wife and his eldest daughter into the Highland country which he had always loved, and which was now to be the scene of a poem. In his young days he had stayed with his college friend, Buchanan, Laird of Cambusmore, and Loch Katrine left a lasting mark on his mind; now, he came back to it, and among the hills and waters themselves he wrote the story of the stag-hunt with which the *Lady of the Lake* opens. At Buchanan House Lady Louisa Stuart and her friend Frances, Lady Douglas (his friend also) were then staying; and Scott rode to recite to them what was still hot from his fancy. There must be hundreds who, like myself, were brought up on that wonderful piece of narrative, and who can read it again and again with renewed enjoyment, five generations after it was written; but it is easy to guess how it must have stirred those two finely sensitive listeners when it came still hot from the maker's anvil.

The *Lady of the Lake* is, by general admission, better composed as a narrative than Scott's other long poems; and it was thought out as a whole before the writing began; for while staying at Cambusmore in the very days when the stag-hunt was being written, he tried out the possibility of riding from Coilantogle Ford (where the river leaves Loch Vennachar) to Stirling Castle within the space of three hours—which is a feat assigned to Fitzjames in the Fifth Canto.

None other of Scott's poems has so much marginal comment of happy incident. He himself has told (in the Introduction written twenty years later) how, while it was in the making, a farmer friend, not book-learned but intelligent and a passionate sportsman, dined at Ashestiel. Scott decided to try on him the effect of the First Canto.

"He placed his hand across his brow, and listened with great attention through the whole account of the stag-hunt, till the dogs throw themselves into the lake to follow their master, who embarks with Ellen Douglas. He then started up with a

sudden exclamation, struck his hand on the table, and declared, in a voice of censure calculated for the occasion, that the dogs must have been totally ruined by being permitted to take the water after such a severe chase."

Cadell, Constable's partner, who in 1810 was only an apprentice, notes that no book by Scott was ever more keenly looked for in Scotland or more ardently received. "Crowds set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine, till then comparatively unknown—and every house and inn in that neighbourhood was crammed with a succession of visitors. The posthorse duty in Scotland rose in an extraordinary degree, and continued to do so for a number of years, the author's succeeding works keeping up the enthusiasm for our scenery which he had thus originally created."

No accountant could ever cipher the debt that hotel-keepers in Scotland, and all the attendant string of coachmen, ostlers and gillies, owe to Walter Scott; and he was not a little proud of this result of his minstrelsy. He had no contempt for the tourist, and no desire to keep his country and countrymen under a glass case, secure against contamination of vulgarity.

Highlanders took him to their heart. In the year after the *Lady of the Lake* appeared he went on a tour to the Hebrides; and one incident of the visit to Staffa he told himself, in a letter to Joanna Baillie.

"I had become a sort of favourite with the Hebridean boatmen, I suppose from my anxiety about their old customs, and they were much pleased to see me get over the obstacles which stopped some of the party. So they took the whim of solemnly christening a great stone seat at the mouth of the cavern, Clachan-an-Bairdh, or the Poet's Stone. It was consecrated with a pibroch, which the echoes rendered tremendous, and a glass of whisky, not poured forth in the ancient mode of libation, but turned over the throats of the assistants. The head boatman, whose father had been himself a bard, made me a speech on the occasion; but as it was in Gaelic, I could only receive it as a silly beauty does a fine-spun compliment—bow, and say nothing."

Scott treats the compliment with his habitual tone of banter, but he adds: "Strange as it may seem, the men were quite serious." If he had known Gaelic, he might easily have been too much moved to joke about it at all, and might have understood that the tribute came from a man who probably could neither read nor write, but probably, also, if he was a bard's son, carried in his memory as much poetry as Scott himself. It is a safe wager, anyhow, that the memory of that day has not been allowed to die out, and that Clachan-an-Bhairdh is still known and shown.

But tribute came also of a kind and from a quarter to which Scott could never feign indifference. Adam Fergusson had been one of his intimates in days of college debating societies; later, he was an original member of The Club; he had been of the party when Scott first saw the Trossachs—the famous gorge that figures so largely in the poem. Now, in 1811, Adam Fergusson was a company officer in the "Black Cuffs" as the regiment liked to be known—then part of the "fighting Third Division" under Wellington in the Peninsula. He wrote to say that when the *Lady of the Lake* first came into his possession on the lines of Torres Vedras, he got nightly invitations to "read and illustrate passages of it" in other messes. Supplies were short, he added, "and in gratitude I am bound to declare that to the good offices of the Lady I owed many a nice slice of ham and rummer of hot punch, which I assure you were amongst the most welcome favours that one officer could bestow on another during the long rainy nights of January and February 1811."

The letter ended with demand for a copy of the music of the Boat Song, "Hail to the Chief." "If you can assist us in this, on every performance a flowing bumper will go round to the Bard."

But there was a climax to the story. Fergusson found himself with his company on a front exposed to artillery fire; the men were ordered to lie flat; and the captain kneeling at the head of them read aloud the description of the battle in the Sixth Canto—only interrupted by

"a joyous huzza whenever the French shot struck the bank close above them."

Yet, for a' that, and a' that, James Ballantyne came into Scott's library shortly after the *Lady* was published, and found his daughter Sophia there—a girl of thirteen. Ballantyne asked her how she liked the *Lady of the Lake*. "Her answer," he says, "was given with perfect simplicity: 'Oh, I have not read it: papa says there is nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry.'"

He could indeed, as he wrote in the Introduction, "with honest truth exculpate himself from having been at any time a partisan of his own poetry even when it was, in the highest fashion with the million." None the less when his daughter grew to be a brilliant young woman, one of the delights of his life was to hear her sing "Young Lochinvar."

If we are now to criticise and analyse, it should first be noted that Scott here abandoned the practice of breaking up his narrative with something of a wholly different interest; yet he still preludes to each canto, like music before the curtain rises, and this time he uses the Spenserian stanza—and uses it well, in a fashion entirely his own.

As to the main story, there is no need to praise the stag-hunt; while men are capable of being delighted with narrative verse, that passage will delight them. Apart from this, there is excellent narrative at the close of the Second Canto when Malcolm Graeme will take from Roderick Dhu "not the poor service of a boat", but swims his passage; yet in the scenes which follow, the simplicity and natural truth is offset by an over-emphatic piece of goblinry.

Gaelic stories tempted all in Scott that answered to German witchraising; and he let himself go here. But then, once again we come back to nature, and to Scott's passion for speed, in the story of mustering the clan and sending out the Fiery Cross. In the Fourth and Fifth Cantos where the Scottish king, adventuring in disguise,



meets the Chief of Clan Alpine, much has faded ; yet much retains its vitality—chiefly the passage (which Mr. Kipling has rivalled rather than imitated in his *Ballad of East and West*) when the Chief's whistle calls up his lurking clan from bush and heather, till his waved hand bids "each warrior vanish where he stood." The whole of that scene with its sudden changes, is brought vividly before the eye ; even the last eight lines will recall it.

"The wind's last breath had toss'd in air  
Pennon, and plaid, and plumage fair ;  
The next but swept a lone hill-side,  
Where heath and fern were waving wide.  
The sun's last glance was glinted back,  
From spear and glaive, from targe and jack ;  
The next, all unreflected, shone  
On bracken green and cold grey stone."

Then there is the sword fight, sabre against broadsword ; and the whole essence of it is packed into one brief line :

"FitzJames' blade was sword and shield."

Diffuse as he is, Scott can excel in terseness, as when he makes his Ellen say of her lover :

"He goes to do—what I had done  
Had Douglas' daughter been his son."

For description, there are passages upon passages admirable as this, that pictures the mountain path to Vennachar.

"An hundred men might hold the post  
With hardihood against a host,  
The rugged mountain's scanty cloak  
Was dwarfish shrubs of birch and oak,  
With shingles bare, and cliffs between,  
And patches bright of bracken green,  
And heather black, that waved so high,  
It held the copse in rivalry.

But where the lake slept deep and still,  
Dank osiers fringed the swamp and hill;  
And oft both path and hill were torn,  
Where wintry torrents down had borne,  
And heap'd upon the cumber'd land  
Its wreck of gravel, rocks, and sand."

For this again, which brings to the mind's eye all that background of lake and mountain: Malise, the runner, sped from the island with his Fiery Cross:

"High stood the henchman on the prow;  
So rapidly the barge-men row,  
The bubbles, where they launch'd the boat,  
Were all unbroken and afloat,  
Dancing in form and ripple still,  
When it had near'd the mainland hill;  
And from the silver beach's side  
Still was the prow three fathom wide,  
When lightly bounded to the land  
The messenger of blood and brand."

The battlepiece does not seem to us perhaps so good as it did to Fergusson's soldiers under the French guns; but in the last canto, especially in the opening description of James's mercenary troops in the Guard Room at Stirling. We get a fuller foretaste of the Waverley Novels than elsewhere in Scott's poems.

All this may be disputable. Detach myself as I will, I cannot be sure of judging here even as competent men of my own generation will judge. But once again, some of the lyrics inset here, with a profusion beyond that of the earlier romances, seem to have earned their place in the abiding treasure house. The famous boat song, "Hail to the Chief," has perhaps too much of the regimental band in its cadences; the guardroom song "Our vicar still preaches," is not to be ranked higher than Friar Tuck's ballad in *Ivanhoe* of the Barefooted Friars—yet who else but Scott could have written either of these lusty things?

There is more real poetry in the "Lay of the Imprisoned Huntsman":

"I wish I were, as I have been,  
Hunting the hart in forests green,"

and the ballad of Alice Brand is better worthy of a place in the *Minstrelsy* than anything of his own that Scott included in 1803.—Lastly, there is Ellen's song, "Soldier, rest, thy warfare o'er," and there is the Coronach, "He is gone on the mountain, he is lost to the forest." These two were included in the *Golden Treasury* that Palgrave made with Tennyson's advice; and simple as they are, they can, in their own way, hold their place beside anything of their time.

One last word:—The poem begins with an invocation to the Harp of the North; the close recalls that opening. This envoy has three stanzas, of which the first and the second have the impersonal note that is proper to a minstrel—singing as it were in the public eye; but in the third, it happens, as now and again in this so versatile and prolific writer, that something gushes out, more intimate, in all probability, than ever Scott disclosed to man or woman. It is a common phenomenon of artistry

"That to the world I will confide  
That's hid from all the world beside."

Here is the sudden rush of disclosure from this "rattle-sculled person, half sportsman, half lawyer," so free a companion to all, yet always struggling with a stoicism like some Norse viking's, to keep down and out of sight an old, aching wound.

"Yet once again farewell, thou Minstrel harp!  
Yet once again forgive my feeble sway,  
And little reck I of the censure sharp  
May idly cavil at an idle lay."

Much have I owed thy strains on life's long way,  
Through secret woes the world has never known,  
When on the weary night dawn'd wearier day,  
And bitterer was the grief devour'd alone.  
That I o'erlive such woes, Enchantress! is thine own."

[One should never forget that under the happy, active  
easy, and prosperous man there was this capacity of  
suffering, marked by these scars of remembered misery.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MOVE TO ABBOTSFORD

1812-13

AFTER the publication of the *Lady of the Lake*, Scott, as he was well entitled to do, planned holiday; and his first thought was "to take a peep at Lord Wellington and his merry men in Portugal." But Mrs. Scott was frightened by the idea, and he gave it up, regretfully. "I daresay I should have picked up some curious materials for battle scenery," he wrote to Joanna Baillie; and he goes on to say how a friend of his had made the expedition, during Wellington's retreat to Torres Vedras, and, riding through the deserted country, finally heard a Highland bagpipe playing "The Garb of Old Gaul": so guided, fell into the arms of a Scotch regiment, and attaching himself to it as a volunteer sharp-shooter saw and took part in the battle of Busaco. There is no doubt that Scott envied him his experience. About the desire to observe his own reactions and those of other men under fire, he says nothing; but he does speak as a writer much impressed by what he gathered from this more privileged observer.

"The narrative was very simply told, and conveyed, better than any I have seen, the impressions which such scenes are likely to make when they have the effect (I had almost said the charm) of novelty. I don't know why it is, I never found a soldier could give me an idea of a battle. I believe their mind is too much upon the *tactique* to regard the picturesque, just as the lawyers care very little for an eloquent speech at the Bar, if it does not show good doctrine. The technical phrases of the

military art, too, are unfavourable to convey a description of the concomitant terror and desolation that attends an engagement."

It is needless to say how passionately this born soldier, debarred from his natural bent, followed the Peninsular struggle. Even when he went from Edinburgh to Ashestiel for the week-end, he would not travel without the big map on which he kept the French and British positions marked out by pins. His zeal was the more, because his forecast had been justified. "I would to God Wellesley were now at the head of the English in Spain," he wrote to Ellis in December 1808; and in April 1811, after the news of Barossa, he wrote to Morritt a passage which might have full application to later and greater events:

"I rejoice with the heart of a Scotsman in the success of Lord Wellington, and with all the pride of a seer to boot. I have been for three years proclaiming him as the only man we had to trust to—a man of talent and genius—not deterred by obstacles, not fettered by prejudices, not immured within the pedantries of his profession—but playing the general and the hero, when most of our military commanders would have exhibited the drill-serjeant, or at best the adjutant. These campaigns will teach us what we have long needed to know, that success depends, not on the nice drilling of regiments, but upon the grand movements and combinations of an army. We have been hitherto polishing hinges, when we should have studied the mechanical union of a huge machine. Now—our army begin to see that the *grand secret*, as the French call it, consists only in union, joint exertion, and concerted movement. This will enable us to meet the dogs on fair terms as to numbers, and for the rest, 'My soul and body on the action both.'"

Since he could not help otherwise, his pen was busy with writings on the war for the *Edinburgh Register*, and with a new project described in the same letter.

"Particularly I meditate some wild stanzas referring to the Peninsula; if I can lick them into any shape, I hope to get something handsome from the booksellers for the Portuguese sufferers: 'Silver and gold have I none, but that which I have I will give unto them.' My lyrics are called the Vision of Don

Roderick: you remember the story of the last Gothic King of Spain descending into an enchanted cavern to know the fate of the Moorish invasion—that is my machinery. Pray don't mention this, for some one will snatch up the subject, as I have been served before; and I have not written a line yet. I am going to Ashestiel for eight days, to fish and rhyme."

By July his "Vision" was ready, and sold: Lord Dalkeith wrote with justice:

"Those with ample fortunes and thicker heads may easily give 100 guineas to a subscription, but the man is really to be envied who can draw that sum from his own brains, and apply the produce so beneficially and to so exalted a purpose."

As a piece of literature, the poem does not take rank with the Scottish metrical romances; and although it had the success which attends such utterances from a popular author at a time of national excitement, the judicious were not deceived. His talent in verse was for narrative—and the Spenserian stanza which he adopted lent itself ill to his galloping speed. In truth the only stanzas that have lasting merit concern the poet, not his theme. In the Introduction he speaks of himself and his compeers as,

"Weak minstrels of a laggard day  
Skill'd but to imitate an elder page."

Yet to such the victories of Wellington have given, he says, "a theme for Milton's mighty hand." He calls upon the mountains and the torrents where Bard and Druid were nursed:

"Oh, if your wilds such minstrelsy retain,  
As sure your changeful gales seem oft to say,  
When sweeping wild and sinking soft again,  
Like trumpet-jubilee, or harp's wild sway;  
If ye can echo such triumphant lay,  
Then lend the note to him has loved you long;  
Who pious gather'd each tradition grey,  
That floats your solitary wastes along,  
And with affection vain gave them new voice in song.

For not till now, how oft soe'er the task  
Of truant verse hath lighten'd graver care,  
From muse or sylvan was he wont to ask,  
In phrase poetic, inspiration fair;  
Careless he gave his numbers to the air;  
They came unsought for, if applauses came;  
Nor for himself prefers he now the prayer:  
Let but his verse befit a hero's fame,  
Immortal be the verse—forgot the poet's name!"

As for the poem itself, it is no more than a piece of poetic journalism; but it should be recognised that the Scottish minstrel gave fair play all round, and excited no jealousies in that force of hardy fighting men from the Three Kingdoms. "I can assure you," Adam Fergusson wrote from Lisbon, "the Pats are to a man enchanted with the picture drawn of their countrymen, and the mention of the great man himself."

*Don Roderick*, however, was literally an unpremeditated effort; and though Scott, when he began to write, was a hasty worker, yet he did not embark on a poem without long forethought; and already one was in cogitation. Failing the Peninsular adventure, he took the long excursion to the Hebrides of which mention has already been made; and the land and water which he visited furnished the setting for his *Lord of the Isles*. Years were to go by before that poem was written; another metrical romance was by this time already shaping in his mind. But once more, as after the completion of the *Lay*, so after he had launched *The Lady of the Lake*, his own instinct turned to prose. In September 1810, he sent to Ballantyne the fragment of *Waverley* which Erskine had seen and slighted, in 1805. Ballantyne's answer, though critical, was not discouraging.

"Should you go on? My opinion is clearly—certainly. I have no doubt of success, though it is impossible to guess how much."

But, as Lockhart writes, the same letter mentioned that the *Lay's* eleventh edition was just ready, and the sixth of the *Lady of the Lake* was already on order; and it should be remembered that by all the standards of that period,



when the prestige of poetry—thanks firstly to Scott himself—stood higher than for half a century, and when prose fiction had fallen into a slough of despond, a poet who planned to write novels seemed to be climbing downwards. At all events, Scott again put the manuscript aside; and by the next summer his imagination was quite otherwise occupied. He had begun to create his own Tweedside home.

The first sight of that haugh and brae—level meadow and hill slope—by Tweedside, dated from a day when his father, driving from Selkirk to Melrose, stopped the carriage and said, "We must get out here, Walter, and see a thing quite in your line." For Mr. Scott's apprentice clerk was already recognised as an impassioned antiquary. Father and son walked up the brae for about half a mile and then the father showed the Turnagain stone, whose story linked it to the last great Clan battle of the Border.

Scott, with his lease of Ashestiel run out, was bound to look for a home, and a home in his sheriffdom. Two farms were available, each with a cottage on it, running back side by side from the right-hand bank of Tweed. One of these included in its limits the Turnagain stone—and Scott, ~~v. 17~~ wanted to acquire both, bought this one, for £4,000. Half of this was lent on mortgage by his elder brother, Major John Scott; such investments were the most usual kind of family arrangement. The other half had to be raised by the Ballantynes, as an advance on the proceeds of a promised new poem. This was a more serious and more novel mortgage. Yet, after all, not so novel. Scott told Crabbe that he had written the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* for the purpose of buying a new horse for the Volunteer Cavalry—which probably means no more than that he hurried up a work long hanging by him with this meritorious object; and *Marmion*, while its completion was still in progress, was pushed into print to retrieve a brother's difficulties. Still, up to this point Scott had never seriously relied on the money result of a literary effort to support his own way of life. Now for the first time he deliberately

put Pegasus into harness, bound for cash considerations to furnish a metrical romance, and thereby to pay for certain lands.

That was no matter to cry about. The same Pegasus had proved his abilities, and his owner undertook no more for him than he was well able to perform; and the stake was not a big one; seeing that Scott had now his clear two thousand a year, over and above what he might earn from literature. At this very time he was in process of earning £1,500 from Constable for the edition of Swift, without counting considerable payments from the *Quarterly Review* for which he wrote two or three articles yearly. The land was bought from an old friend, Dr. Douglas, the minister of Galashiels—the same minister to whom Mrs. Cockburn had described, thirty-four years earlier, her impressions of Walter Scott's astonishing six-year-old son. Four thousand pounds sounds a good deal for about a hundred acres with a small farm house, having "a common kail-yard on one flank, and a staring barn of the Doctor's erection on the other; while in front appeared a filthy pond covered with ducks and duckweed, from which the whole tenement had derived the unharmonious designation of *Clarty Hole*." This language is Lockhart's. Scott himself wrote to Leyden: "The place looks at present very like 'poor Scotland's gear.' It consists of a bank and haugh as poor and bare as Sir John Falstaff's regiment." But the barer the canvas, the finer the field for imagination, and Scott, in love with his purchase, let Leyden know as much. "It has a wild solitary air and commands a splendid reach of the Tweed; and to sum all in the words of Touchstone, 'it is a poor thing, but mine own'."

The one thing that he did not tell Leyden, nor anybody except possibly Erskine, was that, having lent some thousands to the Ballantynes to finance the publishing firm, he had now borrowed a couple of thousands from the firm to which he made his advance, and in this way had begun the inextricable confusion of his own most prosperous and well based private affairs with the fortunes of a speculative concern, managed by men who were not good

men of business.—It is hard for those who love Scott to be in love with Abbotsford—even for the sake of all it meant to him.

What it meant in the outset was modest enough, and loveable enough to appease the austerest judges. In a letter of his first fine frenzy, when he launches hospitable appeals to his wife's brother, the Indian official, he describes the farm, "of which I shall keep fifty acres in pasture and tillage and plant all the rest," and goes on :

"I intend building a small cottage here for my summer abode, being obliged by law, as well as induced by inclination, to make this county my residence for some months every year. This is the greatest incident which has lately taken place in our domestic concerns, and I assure you we are not a little proud of being greeted as *laird* and *lady of Abbotsford*. We will give a grand gala when we take possession of it, and as we are very *clannish* in this corner, all the Scotts in the country, from the Duke to the peasant, shall dance on the green, to the bagpipes, and drink whisky punch. Now as this happy festival is to be deferred for more than a twelvemonth, during which our cottage is to be built, &c., &c., what is there to hinder brother and sister Carpenter from giving us their company upon so gratifying an occasion? Pray, do not stay broiling yourself in India for a moment longer than you have secured comfort and competence."

In plain terms, he was proud of his lairdship, though not the least proud of being the lion of London drawing-rooms. He valued his success in literature chiefly because it had helped him to what is the natural ambition of men in any community which has not completely lost the original stamp ; because it had made him the possessor of land. But his was not the mere pride of ownership ; he was never more truly a poet than in his use of land. All his dreams were of plantation. When he wrote to Joanna Baillie, in whom he had found a sympathetic mind, the fifty acres to be planted had grown to "from sixty to seventy." The house was to have "only two spare bedrooms with dressing-rooms, each of which will on a pinch, have a couch bed"—for it must learn to be elastic as Ashestiel was, against the calls of the "cousins and *duniwastles*." He recognised, too,

that there would be invasions of visitors, drawn simply by curiosity, and the poetess had evidently condoled in advance; but he could not shut the doors of his heart—let alone of his house—against them.

“As for the *go-about* folks, they generally pay their score one way or other; for you, who are always in the way of seeing, and commanding, and selecting your society, are too fastidious to understand how a dearth of news may make anybody welcome that can tell one the current report of the day. If it is any pleasure to these stragglers to say I made them welcome as strangers, I am sure that costs me nothing—only I deprecate publication, and am now the less afraid of it that I think scarce any bookseller will be desperate enough to print a new Scottish tour. Besides, one has the pleasure to tell over all the stories that have bored your friends a dozen of times, with some degree of propriety. In short, I think, like a true Scotchman, that a stranger, unless he is very unpleasant indeed, usually brings a title to a welcome along with him.”

Who could grudge a man like this house and land of his own, even if Pegasus must go into harness to pay for them?

Abbotsford the estate, it should be said, owes its name to the new possessor: the ford was there, just above the point where Gala flows into the Tweed; all the lands that his lairdship included had belonged to the Abbots of Melrose; and so the name of the dwelling was to be Abbotsford which should supersede “*Clarty Hole*.” Heaven knows, the Minstrel of Tweedside had a right to borrow what pleased him from the feudal memories of Melrose; and the name he chose is now part of his own immortality. He was the strong man in his strength these days. “The outside of my head is waxing grizzled,” he wrote to Leyden in the letter which told of his new purchase, “but I cannot find that the snow has cooled either my brain or my heart.”

*Perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*—the old phrase might have been specially invented for this Borderer. His warm sanguine temper overmastered the canny Scot—who was in him too. “No Scotchman of his time was more entirely Scotch than Walter Scott; the good and the not so good, which all Scotchmen inherit, ran through every fibre of

him." That is one of the true things which Carlyle said in an essay containing many other judgments by no means so true.

All the first beginnings of Abbotsford were cannily enough projected; but Scott's first counsellor was not without the perfervid touch. This was Mr. Daniel Terry, who, after being trained as an architect, went on the stage, and was part of the company recruited by Henry Siddons when he took a theatre in Edinburgh. As early as January 1810, Scott wrote to Joanna Baillie with approval of Terry's performance in her play *The Fairy Legend*: and since both he and his wife were ardent theatre-goers, and Terry was already a friend of the Ballantynes, poet and actor soon met. According to Lockhart, the little man fell in love with the big one; picked up even the trick of his handwriting till Scott used to say that the most he could swear to of a given Scott manuscript was that it was either in his own hand or Terry's; and the mimicry went so far that the actor, of Irish stock, born in Bath, "spoke habitually with Scott's tone and accent and knit his eyebrows into the same meditative frown." But underneath these absurdities was a genuine affection on both sides, nourished by Terry's special knowledge of the Elizabethan drama and of all the antiquarian lore about "auld knicknackets" which gave him and Scott a common field of interest.—Terry then naturally was summoned down to Ashestiel soon after the purchase, and daily rode over the grounds at Abbotsford, planning out the arrangements for house and garden. Terry also suggested an architect, Mr. Stack, for "an ornamental cottage in the style of the old English vicarage house"—which was the project in the autumn of 1811. But in 1812, before building had got far, Stack died, and Terry went to London to play at the Haymarket. In London he remained, reporting to Scott of old books, old armour, and other possible purchases, eminently suitable for the dwelling of an antiquarian minstrel. Meantime Scott had removed himself and his belongings into what he describes in a letter to Byron as "a gardener's hut"; but the hut must have been elastic, for he told Terry:

"Our fitting and removal from Ashestiel baffled all description; we had twenty-four cart-loads of the veriest trash in nature, besides dogs, pigs, poneys, poultry, cows, calves, bare-headed wenches, and bare-breeched boys."

He was even more detailed when he wrote, from Ashestiel on May 25th, 1812, to Lady Alvanley while the flitting was in progress:

"I am under the necessity of being at this farm to superintend the transference of my goods and chattels, a most miscellaneous collection, to a small property, about five miles down the Tweed, which I purchased last year. The neighbours have been much delighted with the procession of my furniture, in which old swords, bows, targets, and lances, made a very conspicuous show. A family of turkeys was accommodated within the helmet of some *preux chevalier* of ancient Border fame; and the very cows, for aught I know, were bearing banners and muskets. I assure your ladyship that this caravan, attended by a dozen of ragged, rosy peasant children, carrying fishing-rods and spears, and leading poneys, greyhounds, and spaniels, would, as it crossed the Tweed, have furnished no bad subject for the pencil, and really reminded me of one of the gypsy groups of Callot upon their march."

So accompanied, he took up his abode, at least during weekends (for the Court Session lasted till mid-July); and throughout that summer and autumn, one room served for dining-room, drawing-room, schoolroom, and study. Scott's own desk and chair were curtained off; and there he would write among noises of workmen outside and children within. "As for the house and the poem," he wrote to Morritt, "there are twelve masons hammering at the one, and one poor noddle at the other—so they are both in progress."

Of course there were other things in progress also; there was the edition of Swift in nineteen volumes, involving endless research and correspondence, to say nothing of the life which had to be written. This was work well worth while, to which Scott would not grudge his labour; but at this period there fell on him one of the judgments which visit the good-natured. Miss Anna Seward had been in

correspondence with him since the publication of the *Minstrelsy* ; he had paid her a visit at Lichfield ; she had written him endless letters, and he had, after his custom, replied, though not on the same scale ; indeed once, when in indignation at a protracted silence she had written that she never wished to hear from him again, he had taken her at her word ("it was the crossiest thing I ever did in my life," he told Lockhart)—only to be overwhelmed by more torrents. The end was that Miss Seward took on her not only to die but to appoint "her friend and correspondent Mr. Walter Scott, of Edinburgh," as literary executor, charged with arranging for publication her literary remains which would be found "in a blue hair trunk tied together with a coloured silk braid." In addition, she bequeathed to Constable, the publisher, her entire correspondence, in three trunks—including all Scott's letters to her, and hers to him ; for after the practice of that day she kept copies.

Scott owed much to his friendship with literary women : Lady Louisa Stuart, Joanna Baillie, and later Miss Edgeworth, added much more than a casual pleasure to his life. Miss Seward's legacy was the price that he paid for them.

There is a note of Joanna Baillie's first impression of the author of the *Lay*, when the Minstrel was in the first flush of his fame. She owned to disappointment ; she had looked for "an ideal elegance and refinement of feature."

"But I said to myself, if I had been in a crowd, and at a loss what to do, I should have fixed on that face among a thousand as the sure index of the benevolence and the shrewdness that could help me in any strait."

Miss Seward, at bottom, had the same perception when, like a bewildered female in a railway station, she flung the care of her literary baggage on that shrewdness and benevolence which would certainly see the articles through, making (as Joanna Baillie would have scorned to do) a swift clutch at the particular arm on which she desired to present her candidature for Immortality. "

Scott accepted the labour ; indeed he imposed on the house of Ballantyne three volumes of Miss Seward, which the preliminary Memoir by himself entirely failed to carry

off. Then he had to go to Constable and insist on reading his own letters and removing offhand references to his own contemporaries; and also on shearing Miss Seward's letters to him of some excessive flowerinesses.

However, such affairs as these Walter Scott at the age of forty was well able to take in his stride. But Pegasus was now in the shafts, as well as whatever more domestic animal drew the compiler's chariots; and a poem demanded concentration. It was all the more necessary because this time he broke new ground, and crossed the Border.

On December 20th, 1811, he had written from Edinburgh to Morritt:

"And now, I have a grand project to tell you of. Nothing less than a fourth romance, in verse; the theme, during the English civil wars of Charles I., and the scene, your own domain of Rokeby. I want to build my cottage a little better than my limited finances will permit out of my ordinary income; and although it is very true than an author should not hazard his reputation, yet, as Bob Acres says, I really think Reputation should take some care of the gentleman in return."

The rest of the letter suggested a visit to "the borders of Lancashire and the caves of Yorkshire and so perhaps on to Derbyshire"; and it asked for guidance in local literature and tradition.

Morritt, after sending family history and the rest in profusion, wound up by pressing for a visit from the Scotts, and for companionship in the exploration. He added:

"Should I, in consequence of your celebrity, be obliged to leave Rokeby, from the influx of cockney romancers, artists, illustrators, and sentimental tourists, I shall retreat to Ashestiel, or to your new cottage, and thus visit on you the sins of your writings. At all events, however, I shall raise the rent of my inn at Greta-bridge on the first notice of your book, as I hear the people at Callander have made a fortune by you."

The visit was made in the autumn of 1812, and on the way Scott had evidence that Morritt's views about the effect



on rents had justification. The family travelled, Scott being as usual, on the charger of the moment, and Mrs. Scott in her carriage; the eldest boy and girl were now on ponies. They took Flodden on their way, that the children might hear history expounded where it was made. At Flodden, Scott was recognised by a grateful innkeeper who had done so well out of devotees of *Marmion* that he wanted leave to replace his sign by a new one, "The Scott's Head." But the existing sign was a foaming tankard; the poet praised this work and said nothing could be better. The landlord was inclined to agree, but said he would like his sign to be more connected with the tale that had brought him so much good custom. Would its author at least suggest a motto from the story of Flodden Field? Lockhart writes:

"Scott opened the book at the death scene of the hero, and his eye was immediately caught by the 'inscription' in black letter:

Drink, weary pilgrim, drink and pray  
For the kind soul of Sybil Grey.

'Well, my friend,' said he, 'what more would you have? You need but strike out one letter in the first of these lines, and make your painter-man, the next time he comes this way, print between the jolly tankard and your own name:

"DRINK, weary pilgrim, drink and PAY"'. "

The landlord, wise man, lost no time, and when Scott made his way back, the signboard bore this inscription.

But what would Wordsworth have said?

At Rokeby the poet demanded to be shown "a good robber's cave and a church of the right sort."

"We rode out," says Morritt, "and he found what he wanted in the ancient slate quarries of Brignall and the ruined Abbey of Eggleston. I observed him noting down even the peculiar little wild flowers and herbs that accidentally grew round and on the side of a bold crag near his intended cave of Guy Denzil; and could

not help saying, that as he was not to be upon oath in his work, daisies, violets, and primroses would be as poetical as any of the humble plants he was examining. I laughed, in short, at his scrupulousness; but I understood him when he replied, 'that in nature herself no two scenes were exactly alike, and that whoever copied truly, what was before his eyes, would possess the same variety in his descriptions, and exhibit apparently an imagination as boundless as the range of nature in the scenes he recorded; whereas—whoever trusted to imagination, would soon find his own mind circumscribed, and contracted to a few favourite images, and the repetition of these would sooner or later produce that very monotony and barrenness which had always haunted descriptive poetry in the hands of any but the patient worshippers of truth. Besides which,' he said, 'local names and peculiarities make a fictitious story look so much better in the face.' In fact, from his boyish habits, he was but half-satisfied with the most beautiful scenery when he could not connect with it some local legend, and when I was forced sometimes to confess with the Knife-grinder, 'Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir'—he would laugh and say, 'then let us make one—nothing so easy as to make a tradition'."

This passage has often been quoted—especially by Ruskin—as a guide to the true method of descriptive writing. But Scott had the faculty of selection, and, as compared with Balzac, who multiplies detail till some of his pages read like a botanist's text book, and others like an auctioneer's catalogue, Scott picks out those details which most swiftly recall the scene, and leaves the rest of it blank for the imagination to fill.

Yet, significantly enough, no one should turn to *Rokeby* for illustration of this selective gift. Describing the Borders, describing Highland scenery, Scott works with a few bold touches; here by the banks of Tees, where he had come deliberately to study his background, impressions crowded on him; and though much is admirable writing, the essential is never rendered, as he rendered it time and again in the earlier romances.

Morritt, it is said, told Scott that this was the best poem of them all. The squire of Rokeby was no impartial judge, but he had some warrant for saying that nowhere else had the art of constructing and telling a story in swift

verse been so capably practised by the poet. Scott bespoke Morritt's approval for "two or three songs, and particularly one in praise of Brignal Banks, which I trust you will like—because, *entre nous*, I like them myself." The world still shares that liking, and still would choose "Brignal Banks" even in preference to its companion, "A weary lot is thine, fair maid." "Allen-a-Dale" is in the "Young Lochinvar" strain, and surely goes into the larger gathering of Scott's lyrics which keep their vitality, even if it is not for the final handful by which he can claim rank in the company that has Burns for its chief.

Apart from this, Scott's own observation to Ballantyne should be noted. "The world will not expect from *me* a poem of which the interest turns upon character." Yet the world was very soon to find out that Walter Scott's real strength as an artist lay precisely in character; and the truth is that when for the second time he put away the unfinished manuscript of *Waverley*, he turned to write what is virtually a *Waverley* Novel in verse; a novel with the element of humour suppressed and with the narrative cramped by constraint of rhyme:

" 'Tis mine to tell an onward tale,  
Hurrying as best I can along  
The hearers and the hasty song."

That gift needed a broader channel to flow in. But the central figure of the poem—which is dominated, as Scott himself perceived, by a resolute ruffian—may compare with his later Burleys and Dirk Hatteraicks. And just for the narrative of a killing and a fight, when the ruffian dies "mute as fox 'mong mangling hounds," not many things can better the last few stanzas.

Yet when all is said, not many readers can be advised to seek their pleasure in *Rokeby*. Pegasus did his day's darg; the Ballantynes got well home on their advance; and the instant popularity was great. But public opinion has always justly valued this poem lower than the three fore-runners.

For a student of Scott's biography, however, *Rokeby* has a special interest. Five years after its publication, which took place in the spring of 1813, Miss Edgeworth wrote to him about his poems in general, with special comment on the study of the heroine in *Rokeby*. Scott replied:

"I have not read one of my poems since they were printed, excepting last year the *Lady of the Lake*, which I liked better than I expected, but not well enough to induce me to go through the rest. . . .

"This much of Matilda I recollect—for that is not so easily forgotten)—that she was attempted for the existing person of a lady who is now no more, so that I am particularly flattered with your distinguishing it from the others, which are in general mere shadows."

There is no sort of doubt that the portrait he attempted was that of Lady Forbes, his first love. She died in 1810—a year before *Rokeby* was begun. There is no allusion to her death in his correspondence; but we may guess from those entries in his journal of twenty years later which have been already quoted how it must have moved him. He is a poor biographer nowadays, who cannot produce some detail of sexual divagation in the subject of his labour; but prolonged study of Walter Scott yields no more than this: that after he had been long and prosperously married, with his children growing up about him, his mind still reverted with unassuaged tenderness to her who was the first passion of his youth; and that after her death he sketched at least some vague semblance of what had been the relation between them. She is shown, as in the early days of real life, set between two lovers; and manifestly the poet identifies himself with the unsuccessful lover—though in the poem all worldly odds are on the bookish dreamer, and the preferred rival has nothing but his personal charm and his good sword. Wilfrid has wealth and station to offer; but it is Wilfrid's suit that Scott describes:

"To love her was an easy hest,  
The secret empress of his breast;

To woo her was a harder task  
 To one that durst not hope or ask.  
 Yet all Matilda could, she gave  
 In pity to her gentle slave;  
 Friendship, esteem, and fair regard,  
 And praise, the poet's best reward!  
 She read the tales his taste approved,  
 And sung the lays he framed or loved;  
 Yet, loth to nurse the fatal flame  
 Of hopeless love in friendship's name,  
 In kind caprice she oft withdrew  
 The favouring glance to friendship due,  
 Then grieved to see her victim's pain,  
 And gave the dangerous smiles again."

It was Wilfrid who was accustomed:

"By Greta's side, in evening grey,  
 To steal upon Matilda's way,  
 Striving, with fond hypocrisy,  
 For careless step and vacant eye;  
 Calming each anxious look and glance,  
 To meet the meeting all to chance,  
 Or framing, as a fair excuse,  
 The book, the pencil, or the muse:  
 Something to give, to sing, to say,  
 Some modern tale, some ancient lay.  
 Then, while the long'd-for minutes last,—  
 Ah! minutes quickly over-past!  
 Recording each expression free,  
 Of kind or careless courtesy,  
 Each friendly look, each softer tone,  
 As food for fancy when alone."

Just as surely as we discern that in the opening chapters of *Waverley* Scott describes his own education, we can perceive here that the poet remembers rather than invents. As to the description of the lady, his letter to Miss Edgeworth admits that it drew from an original. The passage will be found in the Fourth Canto; it gives her dark-brown rings of hair that half hid her forehead and "full dark eyes of hazel"; it gave her cheeks with little colour, yet quickly flushing when her interest or her feeling was aroused.

Then follow lines that convey their impression, for all their old-fashioned style :

“ There was a soft and pensive grace,  
A cast of thought upon her face,  
That suited well the forehead high,  
The eyelash dark, and downcast eye;  
The mild expression spoke a mind  
In duty firm, composed, resign’d;  
’Tis that which Roman art has given  
To mark their maiden Queen of Heaven,  
In hours of sport that mood gave way  
To Fancy’s light and frolic play;  
And when the dance, or tale, or song,  
In harmless mirth sped time along,  
Full oft her doating sire would call  
His Maud the merriest of them all ”

That was how Walter Scott chose to represent for his own solace the woman who in early life had, after long wavering, rejected him for a wealthier suitor; who left his nature stamped by vestiges of passion that endured with an intensity of persistence certainly very rare in man. Literature is crammed with the reproaches of poets against those who slighted their claim for such considerations; and Scott’s early lines on the violet show that in his first bitterness he, too, cried out upon falseness in love. As the years passed, and with brief delay made of him, one who was even for mere worldly considerations by far more desirable than his rival, a fine theme for retrospective declamation lay open—had the poet been other than Walter Scott. With him on the contrary, through the modesty of his heart, things altered in retrospect to a kindlier shape. He no longer thought of himself as one who loved and was preferred for himself, yet had to see another chosen; all that he chose to remember was that he had loved, and that another had won the prize. But he remembered the suffering; and there is a passage which describes Wilfrid the visionary, “Fancy’s spoiled and wayward child.”

“ In her bright car she bade him ride  
With one fair form to grace his side.”

Then comes a stanza which moralises sternly enough :

“Woe to the youth whom Fancy gains,  
 Winning from Reason’s hand the reins.  
 . . . And woe to those who train such youth  
 And spare to press the rights of truth.”

It is poor poetry ; and like many other passages in Scott, which bear on his own innate history, it has no artistic relevance ; but it makes plain one thing, that he blames no one but himself, and perhaps those who did not sufficiently discourage his hopes, for the disappointment that gave his youth the long sleepless nights, such as he attributes to his Wilfrid, when

“Fancy wakes some idle thought  
 To gild the ruin she has wrought,  
 For like the bat of Indian brakes,  
 Her pinions fan the wound she makes,  
 And soothing thus the dreamer’s pain,  
 She drinks his life-blood from the vein.”

For in this strong man, so admirably normal in strange upliftings of fortune—as Carlyle says, “a most robust, healthy man,”—there was always latent that hysterica passio, that “climbing mother of evil,” repressed through life, yet always intimately connected with all that made him an artist. One may be sure, in reading lines on Wilfrid, that he who wrote them remembered the “untrimm’d lamp,” the “couch unpress’d since parting day,” and the long vigil when eyes turned vainly to the lattice for the relief of daylight. Yet this is only a passing mood in his memories ; and one more passage must be noted which gives the final presentment of the one whose portrait he desired to trace between her two wooers. She is in the stress of danger, and in the anxiety of awaiting it, the two young men clasp hands.

“There was no speech the truce to bind,  
 It was a compact of the mind,—  
 A generous thought at once impress’d  
 On either rival’s generous breast.

Matilda well the secret took,  
From sudden change of mien and look.

They closed beside the chimney's blaze,  
And talk'd, and hoped for happier days,  
And lent their spirits' rising glow  
Awhile to gild impending woe;  
High privilege of youthful time,  
Worth all the pleasures of our prime!  
The bickering fagot sparkled bright,  
And gave the scene of love to sight,  
Bade Wilfrid's cheek more lively glow,  
Play'd on Matilda's neck of snow,  
Her nut-brown curls and forehead high,  
And laugh'd in Redmond's azure eye.  
Two lovers by the maiden sate,  
Without a glance of jealous hate;  
The maid her lovers sat between,  
With open brow and equal mien."

Is it only a fancy to believe that Scott looking back on that past recalled one hour when the two young men, forgetting jealousy, knew some such ungrudging delight in the presence of their mistress? Be that as it may, what other poet but Scott, representing in an imaginary setting, the one whom he had loved and showing her as once more sought by two young lovers, could have given the heroic part to the lover who was not the poet?

Immediately after *Rokeby* there was published another long poem by the same author—but published anonymously. This amazing worker could not content himself with doing his legal work, supervising the building of his new house, the laying out of his gardens, the planting of his trees—(more than supervising, for he took part in all, and spade, dibble and chisel were constantly in his hand) and at the same time editing Swift, writing up current history for the *Edinburgh Register*, seeing the volumes of Miss Seward through the press. These were not enough secondary occupations while he was writing *Rokeby*. He must weave into a whole the fragments of Arthurian legend which he had versified and published from time to time in the *Edinburgh Register*.



The fabric as he wove it, had not merely warp and woof; it was triple-twisted. First, for exterior setting, is the story of an *impecunious* suitor who woos and wins, yet who cannot keep from satire at the "puny fop, trimmed cap-a-pee," the "Hessian boot and pantaloons," and all the "walking haberdashery of feathers, lace and fur." This part of the poem has suggestions that Scott, like everyone else, had been reading Tom Moore; also, it has anticipations of the inferior passages in Tennyson's *Maud*. Next to this comes the romance, told by the poet lover to his mistress, of Sir Roland de Vaux's errand—when that knight set out from his castle of Triermain to seek for tidings of the lady who appeared to him in a dream; and then comes the tale told by Lyulph, descendant of the Druids to de Vaux's page. This inner kernel of the romance consists in the story how King Arthur loved Gwendolen, *par amours*, and how the daughter born of their love appeared before Arthur and claimed his promise that her hand should be the prize of tourney; how Merlin stopped the fight, which would have ended the Round Table in mutual slaughter, and shut away Gwendolen's daughter in an enchanted castle in the Vale of St. John. When Lyulph's tale is ended, the poet lover takes up the story and tells how de Vaux adventured and won, fighting his way through a complication of enchantments in which full reign is given to fancy—until we realise that Scott as a poet is of no use to us, unless when his imagination is at work to re-create some tale which has some root in history; unless he is relating things which might all of them conceivably have happened, and many of which probably did happen time and again.

The best one can say for *The Bridal of Triermain* is that Scott evidently enjoyed composing what was evidently composed at the rate of a hunt; and his treatment of it shows sufficiently what store he set by it. He deliberately set about to mislead critics into the belief that it was written by an imitator, and even laid himself out to fix suspicion on Erskine—who entered into the plot. An introduction concerning Romantic Poetry was prefixed, and Erskine rewrote this, from Scott's notes, adding quotations from

Longinus. Scott was widely known to be ignorant of Greek ; this seemed conclusive ; and the *Quarterly Review*, amongst others, was taken in.

It is an odd example of that liking for mystification which led Scott to conceal much that he had better have avowed, and so placed him in more than one embarrassing position.

Lady Louisa Stuart, it is good to remember, came down upon some of the tawdriest passages ; and Scott promised to convey "her Ladyship's very just strictures to the imitator. But if he likes the opinion of an old hacked author like myself, he will content himself with avoiding such *bévues* in future without attempting to mend those that are already made."

That was Scott's literary creed first and last ; there was very little correction of his work before publication, and once published, it had to stand. He was of Victor Hugo's mind, that a man should mend his bad works by making better ones.

It is pleasant, after considering this poem which showed all the defects of Scott's literary taste, and the circumstances of its publication which perhaps show a lack of other taste, to turn to Scott, the householder and the tree planter. He wrote to George Ellis in January 1813, to announce the packet that would contain *Rokeby* ; and he ended :

"Charlotte is with me just now at this little scrub habitation, where we weary ourselves all day in looking at our projected improvements, and then slumber over the fire, I pretending to read, and she to work trout-nets, or cabbage-nets, or some such article."

Next day it was Joanna Baillie's turn, and she as usual got a full utterance of his mind.

"No sooner had I corrected the last sheet of *Rokeby* than I escaped to this Patmos, as blythe as bird on tree, and have been ever since most decidedly idle—that is to say, with busy idleness. I have been banking, and securing, and dyking against the river, and planting willows, and aspens, and weeping birches,

around my new old well, which I think I told you I had constructed last summer. I have now laid the foundations of a famous background of copse, with pendant trees in front; and I have only to beg a few years to see how my colours will come out of the canvas. Alas! who can promise that? But somebody will take my place, and enjoy them. whether I do or no. My old friend, and pastor, Principal Robertson (the historian), when he was not expected to survive many weeks, still watched the setting of the blossom upon some fruit trees in the garden with as much interest as if it was possible he could have seen the fruit come to maturity, and moralized on his own conduct, by observing that we act upon the same inconsistent motive throughout life. It is well we do so, for those that are to come after us. I could almost dislike the man who refuses to plant walnut-trees, because they do not bear fruit till the second generation."

## CHAPTER X

### FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES AND THE PUBLICATION OF "WAVERLEY"

1813-14

1813 was a bad year for Scott; and yet it was the foundation of a new and greater fortune.

The trouble lay in that part of his life which was secret from all of his friends except Erskine—his unseen partnership with the Ballantynes, both as printers and as publishers.

He had not been responsible for the launch of the printing business; but on his advice James Ballantyne had moved to Edinburgh. For the addition of the book-selling and publishing business, set up in rivalry to Constable, he was probably chiefly to blame. The venture was never a sound one, and both he and the Ballantynes had more than enough on hand with the printing. At the back of it lay his desire to be able to snap his fingers at the world and more especially at Constable, whom he thought dictatorial.

Also, he was at least partly responsible for the choice of his associates. James Ballantyne was a good director of the printing press, but he was lazy. Scott's correspondence is full of letters urging on his partners to be more in their office. The younger brother had evidently no sort of merit as a business man, and he was the leak in the ship. It was the bookselling business that first came into grave distress, and John Ballantyne, who had been brought into the partnership for his skill in accounts,

never could bring himself to realise how their finances actually stood, and still less to keep his associates aware of coming difficulties. It is plain that but for Scott the bookselling concern would have gone into bankruptcy in this year, even if the printing house were not involved in its downfall. But it is equally plain that Scott's zeal for literature had led him into advising huge publications, which could not be expected to pay.

Things came to a head in the spring of 1813, after the publication of *Rokeby* and the *Bridal of Triermain*. The Ballantynes were obliged to go to Constable with a proposal that he should take a mass of stock off their hands, in addition to the management of the *Edinburgh Register*. The last, on investigation, proved to have been steadily losing £1,000 a year; and in brief, Ballantynes had nothing of value to offer but an interest in the publication of Scott's own works and a guarantee that the bookselling and publishing firm would withdraw from competition in business as soon as this could prudently be managed. Scott himself had to negotiate, and a treaty was concluded. "For the first time these many weeks, I shall lay my head on a quiet pillow," he wrote to John Ballantyne, in a letter of affectionate remonstrance.—Scott loved this little man ("jocund Johnny," "Rigdumfunnidos" as he called him)—with more indulgence than he gave, or had need to give, to the elder brother—abler, more serious, pompous even: Scott's name for him was Aldiborontiphosco-phornio.

But James Ballantyne also was genial company, and sang a good song; they were old friends, they were a sort of retainers, and he could not bring himself to separate his fortunes from theirs, once he had, by his own motion, gone into partnership with them.

His gentle reproaches were followed up by a letter imploring John Ballantyne to keep his partners informed in advance of any approaching difficulties. But two months later an express came to Abbotsford demanding cash to meet an emergency; and only a week or two after that, when Scott had gone to stay with the Duke of Buccleuch

at Drumlanrig Castle, in Dumfriesshire, another express followed him, and another hot-foot on that. "I return your draft accepted," Scott writes. "On Wednesday I think of leaving this place, where, but for these damned affairs, I should have been very happy." Then he set off for Rokeby, and again messengers pursued him. He was, as he wrote, being called on to support a losing concern at the rate of £200 a month.

Worry added to work will break down the strongest, and the letter enclosing a draft for £350 contained this sentence, most unlike Scott's normal tone:

"I really am not adequate to the fatigue of mind which these affairs occasion me, though I must do my best to struggle through them."

It became plain that something serious had to be done. Constable was consulted, and said that somehow or other no less than £4,000 must be raised; and it was now proposed that John Ballantyne should go out of the firm and take up business as an auctioneer.

In the face of all this, Scott naturally rebelled. He indicated his desire to retire from the printing house "so soon as I can possibly do so with safety to myself, and with the regard I shall always entertain for James's interest. Whatever loss I may sustain will be preferable to the life I have lately led, when I seem surrounded by a sort of magic circle which neither permits me to remain at home in peace, nor to stir abroad with pleasure."

It is the pity of the world that he did not persevere in this resolution. Two things worked against it. The first and chief was his personal loyalty to the Ballantynes; the second, a desire to save the large sums he had advanced to the business. If the case had been considered merely on business grounds, he was far too shrewd not to see that the chances of gain to himself in it were much outweighed by those of loss. But an expedient presented itself—and perhaps it was partly suggested by an unexpected offer of the vacant laureateship.

"Were I my own man," Scott wrote to James Ballantyne, "I would refuse this (with all gratitude); but as I am situated, £300 or £400 a year is not to be sneezed at on a point of poetical honour—and it makes me a better man to that extent."

Probably the sense that he was "to that extent a better man"—less necessitous—prompted him to ask a favour.

"It occurred to me," he wrote to Ballantyne, "that I had some title to ask the Duke of Buccleuch's guarantee to a cash account for £4,000, as Constable proposes."

"Some title" means probably that Scott, who conceived of himself as bound by a bond of clan loyalty, felt that he could claim support from the clan's head. The letter to the Duke set out the alternatives: that he must either raise £4,000 on his own credit, or part with his copyrights at a great sacrifice; and it detailed the grounds for believing that the Duke's "sanction" to his credit would be the extent of the service. But then Scott proceeded to report the offer of the laureateship, and to state that his real feeling of reluctance was lest he, so favoured by the public, should "be considered as engrossing a petty emolument which might do real service to some poorer brother of the Muses."

The Duke's answer was frank and friendly. He agreed "with pleasure" to the guarantee. As to the laureateship, "I shall frankly say that I should be mortified to see you hold a situation which by the general concurrence of the world is stamped ridiculous."

The upshot was that this £4,000 tided over the emergency—though not finally; in October Scott was writing to John Ballantyne: "For God's sake treat me as a man and not a milch cow." Rumours of distress spread, and Morritt wrote from Rokeby, proffering help to avert the rumoured bankruptcy; but by the end of November Scott could answer that this danger was over, and to relieve this "kind and affectionate heart", he gave a full account of his standing in the world.

"I am young, with a large official income, and if I lose anything now, I have gained a great deal in my day. I cannot tell you, and will not attempt to tell you, how much I was affected by your letter—so much, indeed, that for several days I could not make my mind up to express myself on the subject. Thank God! all real danger was yesterday put over—and I will write, in two or three days, a funny letter, without any of these vile cash matters, of which it may be said there is no living with them nor without them."

"Upon the whole, I see no prospect of any loss whatever," he said in this letter. He had confidence in himself—with justice. He had begun the poem which throughout this year had been in his mind as the main thing by which he could relieve the position; it was *The Lord of the Isles*. But also in the autumn of this year, at Abbotsford, some guest came down to fish in the late months (when the Tweed is at its best) and asked for flies. Scott could not find the tackle at first, then be-thought him of a desk stowed away upstairs; went to look, and there, lying with the gut and hooks and feathers, were the chapters of the unfinished novel. He took them out, looked at them, and decided he would go on.—He had put his hand on a gold mine, though it did not come into bearing for a year yet.

Two things more should be noted. In the middle of these money embarrassments there came a cry of distress from Maturin, the Irish dramatist, and Scott sent him fifty pounds.

Secondly, in the matter of the laureateship, Scott replied declining in the most civil terms and setting out to the Prince's librarian his repugnance to "the necessity of a regular commemoration." At the same time he wrote to Croker, urging strongly the claim of Southey—and to Southey he sent a letter which is too characteristic not to be given in full.

"ABBOTSFORD;

4th September, 1813.

"MY DEAR SOUTHEY,—On my return here I found, to my no small surprise, a letter tendering me the laurel vacant by the



death of the poetical Pye. I have declined the appointment, as being incompetent to the task of annual commemoration; but chiefly as being provided for in my professional department, and unwilling to incur the censure of engrossing the emolument attached to one of the few appointments which seems proper to be filled by a man of literature who has no other views in life. Will you forgive me, my dear friend, if I own I had you in my recollection. I have given Croker the hint, and otherwise endeavoured to throw the office into your option. I am uncertain if you will like it, for the laurel has certainly been tarnished by some of its wearers, and as at present managed, its duties are inconvenient and somewhat liable to ridicule. But the latter matter might be amended, as I think the Regent's good sense would lead him to lay aside these regular commemorations; and as to the former point, it has been worn by Dryden of old, and by Warton in modern days. If you quote my own refusal against me, I reply—first, I have been luckier than you in holding two offices not usually conjoined; secondly, I did not refuse it from any foolish prejudice against the situation—otherwise how durst I mention it to you, my elder brother in the muse!—but from a sort of internal hope that they would give it to you, upon whom it would be so much more worthily conferred. For I am not such an ass as not to know that you are my better in poetry, though I have had, probably but for a time, the tide of popularity in my favour. I have not time to add ten thousand other reasons, but I only wished to tell you how the matter was, and to beg you to think before you reject the offer which I flatter myself will be made to you. If I had not been, like Dogberry, a fellow with two gowns already, I should have jumped at it like a cock at a gooseberry.

“Ever yours most truly,  
“WALTER SCOTT.”

The Regent had the good sense to accept Scott's hint, and relieve the office of the obligatory odes; so that Southey had no need to fear being (as the Duke of Buccleuch painted the scene to Scott) “chaunted and recitativèd by a parcel of hoarse and squeaking choristers on a birthday, for the edification of the bishops, pages of honour and gentlemen-pensioners.”

If, since Southey, the office has been held with high distinction (apart from one relapse), praise is due at least in part to Scott. But at the moment he was disappointed

in his over-sanguine estimate of the good turn he had done Southey.

"I do not delay, my Dear Southey, to say my *gratulator*. Long may you live, as Paddy says, to rule over us, and to redeem the crown of Spenser and of Dryden to its pristine dignity. I am only discontented with the extent of your royal revenue, which I thought had been £400, or £300 at the very least. Is there no getting rid of that iniquitous modus, and requiring the *butt* in kind? I would have you think of it; I know no man so well entitled to Xeres sack as yourself, though many bards would make a better figure at drinking it. I should think that in due time a memorial might get some relief in this part of the appointment—it should be at least £100 wet and £100 dry."

In another matter, a biographer feels it necessary—even Lockhart found it necessary—to sit in judgment upon the poet. While the Ballantynes' affairs were in the worst confusion, Scott was buying more land. A hilly tract running back from that which he had acquired by the Tweed was for sale; its owner was "a very capricious person," and it was now or never; at all events the capricious owner succeeded in making the too eager buyer believe this. So in July 1813, Scott became possessor of lands which included part of the old Roman road leading to the ford of Tweed, and also the desolate and romantic and therefore desirable Cauldshiels Loch. The estate thus combined the attractions of both lake and river—to say nothing of the Roman road.

Land was of course an investment—though Scott was at this moment in no position to make investments; but when, after the wheel had come full circle, he wrote later, "land was my temptation," he knew that land for him had never been an investment. He bought for sentimental values. It was part of that passion for his country which made him a poet. But—to be rigorously just—there was in him that antiquarian foible which nobody has satirised so well as himself, and which did not limit itself to land. In this same month of July 1813, with the firm's bankruptcy imminent, he is writing to Terry bidding him

acquire "that splendid lot of ancient armour, advertised by Winstanley." The only thing to be said in extenuation is that either Balzac or Dumas would have done exactly the same—except that they would have been less careful whether they could pay for it.

1813 closed with jubilation, for Napoleon was in full retreat across the Rhine.

"We are here almost mad with the redemption of Holland which has had an instant and gratifying<sup>4</sup> effect on the trade of Leith and indeed all along the east coast of Scotland," he wrote to Joanna Baillie on the 10th of December. When spring came he was at Abbotsford—exulting to Morritt, on April 30th, 1814:

"'Joy—joy in London now!'—and in Edinburgh, moreover, my dear Morritt; for never did you or I see, and never again shall we see, according to all human prospects, a consummation so truly glorious, as now bids fair to conclude this long and eventful war. The feeling of the French officers (prisoners on parole),<sup>1</sup> of whom we have many in our vicinity, is very curious, and yet natural. Many of them, companions of Buonaparte's victories, and who hitherto have marched with him from conquest to conquest, disbelieve the change entirely."

Some weeks later, he wrote to Southey reflections which have more of the stuff of poetry than his verse on the same theme. These really paint the time:

"I suspended writing to thank you for the *Carmen Triumphale*—(a happy omen of what you can do to immortalise our public story)—until the feverish mood of expectation and anxiety should be over. And then, as you truly say, there followed a stunning sort of listless astonishment and complication of feeling, which, if it did not lessen enjoyment, confused and confounded one's sense of it. I remember the first time I happened to see a launch, I was neither so much struck with the descent of the vessel, nor with its 'majestic sweep to its

<sup>1</sup> A good many French officers, prisoners of war, had been living on parole in Melrose, and the adjoining villages; and Mr. and Mrs. Scott had been particularly kind and hospitable to them.

moorings, as with the blank which was suddenly made from the withdrawing so large an object, and the prospect which was at once opened to the opposite side of the dock crowded with spectators. Buonaparte's fall strikes me something in the same way: the huge bulk of his power, against which a thousand arms were hammering, was obviously to sink when its main props were struck away—and yet now—when it has disappeared—the vacancy which it leaves in our minds and attention, marks its huge and preponderating importance more strongly than even its presence."

That was dated June 17th, from Edinburgh, where *Waverley* was in the last stages of its swift completion. It had been on the anvil of his mind since November; but work of a more work-a-day kind stood in the way. The edition of Swift had to be finished and got out.

This actually appeared on July 1st—in nineteen volumes; greatly enlarging the number of pieces both in prose and verse which are rightly attributable to the Dean. There is also the *Life*—a study of one of the strangest men that ever made a name in letters; in no way congenial to Scott; a man of whom it is hard to write with balanced judgment, so violent was his nature. Yet Swift's story is told by Scott with a large charity and comprehension, instructive to compare with Thackeray's hysterical vehemence on the same theme.

For the purpose of this volume, however, the work is of interest mainly as it throws light on Scott himself; and one passage may be quoted to explain his scrupulous conformity to rules which Swift prided himself on overriding, in the right of admitted or asserted genius.

"The insisting that a duke should make him the first visit merely because he was a duke—this and other capricious exertions of despotic authority over the usual customs of society are unworthy of Swift's good sense and penetration. In a free country the barriers of etiquette between the ranks of society are but frail and low, the regular gate is open, and the tax of admittance a trifle; and he who out of mere wantonness overleaps the

fence may be justly supposed not to have attained a philosophical indifference to the circumstances by having been born in the excluded district."

On the other hand he praises, with a master's insight, what he calls Swift's "art of verisimilitude—the power of adopting and sustaining a fictitious character under every peculiarity of place and circumstance.

"A considerable part of this secret rests upon minuteness of narrative. Small and detached facts form the foreground of a narrative when they are told by an eye-witness. They have with respect to him as an individual an importance which they are far from bearing to the general scene in which he is engaged; just as a musket shot passing near the head of a soldier makes a deeper impression on his mind than all the heavy ordnance. But . . . it requires the discrimination of Swift or of De Foe to select in a fictitious narrative such an enumeration of minute incidents as might strike the beholder of a real fact, especially such a one as had not been taught to generalise his observations."

He observes that De Foe's capacity of invention was limited to one or two characters.

"But Swift seems, like the Persian dervish, to have possessed the faculty of transferring his own soul into the body of anyone he selected; of seeing with his eyes, employing every organ of his sense, and even becoming master of the powers of his judgment. Each maintains his own character, moves in his own sphere and is struck with the circumstances which his situation in life and habits of thinking have rendered most interesting to him as an individual."

Further, Swift is praised for maintaining a true perspective in narrative. When Gulliver describes his own actual experience, we get small details; but those circumstances and institutions which he reports as related or described to him are treated with more generality.—Scott in his seat at the Clerk's table had heard innumerable people tell their story of events; this passage makes us realise how the novelist was all the time at school there.

Even when the work on Swift was finished, Constable pressed this invaluable man-of-all-work to furnish articles on 'Chivalry' and on 'The Drama' for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and Scott agreed—as was only just; he owed Constable a good turn. But then he flung himself at the novel—which had been advertised to appear in March. On the 4th of June he began to write the second volume and by the 30th the third was completed.—Lockhart tells a tale which is not easily to be forgotten. He himself, a young-law student, dined with his fellow student Menzies (afterwards a Judge at the Cape) in George Street, from which North Castle Street runs off at right angles. Dinner was over, and the young men adjourned to the library which looked north across the corner of the garden on which North Castle Street also faced. They sat there continuing to pass the bottle when Lockhart, noting that his friend and host looked uneasy, asked if he was unwell.

“No” said he, ‘I shall be well enough presently, if you will only let me sit where you are, and take my chair; for there is a confounded hand in sight of me here, which has often bothered me before, and now it won’t let me fill my glass with a good will.’ I rose to change places with him accordingly, and he pointed out to me this hand which, like the writing on Belshazzar’s wall, disturbed his hour of hilarity. ‘Since we sat down,’ he said, ‘I have been watching it—it fascinates my eye—it never stops—page after page is finished and thrown on that heap of MS. and still it goes on unwearied—and so it will be till candles are brought in, and God knows how long after that. It is the same every night—I can’t stand a sight of it when I am at my books.’—‘Some stupid, dogged, engrossing clerk, probably,’ exclaimed myself, ‘or some other giddy youth in our society.’ ‘No, boys,’ said our host, ‘I well know what hand it is—’tis Walter Scott’s.’”

That was how *Waverley* was finished—in a month, when Scott was spending five or six hours in Court five days of the week.

It was hurried through the press and came out on July 7th, “in three little volumes, with a humility of paper

and printing which the meanest novelist would now disdain to imitate; the price a guinea." Constable had offered £750 for the copyright, but declined to go to £1,000; yet for a half share in *The Lord of the Isles* he willingly paid £1,500. *Waverley* was published on the basis of dividing the profit. It was printed of course by Ballantyne.

Writing to Morritt, the only friend to whom he at once avowed it, Scott described it as "a small anonymous sort of novel," and adds: "I had a great deal of fun in the accomplishment of this task, though I do not expect it will be popular in the south, as much of the humour, if there be any, is local, and some even professional."

He goes on to describe the speculation as to its author, with manifest delight. Morritt begged him to own the work, but he answered.

"I shall not own *Waverley*; my chief reason is that it would prevent me of the pleasure of writing again. . . . In truth I am not sure it would be considered quite decorous for me, as a Clerk of Session, to write novels. Judges being monks, clerks, are a sort of lay brethren from whom some solemnity of walk and conduct may be expected. So whatever I may do of this kind, I shall whistle it down the wind and let it prey at fortune."

This raises questions as to the status of the novel which must be considered in a new chapter. Here let us note that for the first time the artist is avowing delight in his work and in the prospect of continuing it.

Two years before this, on April 4th, 1812, while he was working at *Rokeby*, he had written to Joanna Baillie:

"I am labouring sure enough; but I have not yet got on the right path where I can satisfy myself I shall go on with courage."

From the time when *Waverley* was published he had no more doubts as to the right path.

While Edinburgh was still a-buzz with excitement over the book, Scott vanished. He went off with the Commissioners of Northern Lights in their yacht to visit the lighthouses all round Scotland and even to the North Shetland, thus cutting himself off far more completely from communication than a journey to Australia would do nowadays.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE BEGINNING OF THE WAVERLEY NOVELS\*

1814

THE publication of *Waverley* was in some ways the most important literary event of the nineteenth century, because it established what was to be—though with the widest range of variation—the dominant literary form. However we may rate their works comparatively, it is hardly to be denied that Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Stevenson, Meredith and Hardy affected the public mind more powerfully even than Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson and Browning. We may or may not think the prose likely to be durable as the poetry, but the two streams of artistic invention are comparable in importance. To have said in the year before *Waverley* appeared that such a comparison was possible, would have drawn down indignant ridicule.

It is well to pray in aid a judge who speaks with the wider continental outlook, and M. Abel Chevalley, in his brilliant treatise *Le Roman Anglais*, summarises in a brief contrast the work of Walter Scott. "*Avant lui, rien n'était indigne du roman ; après, il n'est plus rien dont le roman ne soit digne.*" This judgment has a Delphic complexity of meanings. Nothing was too low for the novel before Walter Scott's work, nothing too high for it afterwards; the greatest talents might find employment in the sphere in which the meanest had contrived a place for themselves. But also, before the English school of the eighteenth century created the modern novel, prose fiction had two traditional uses; it might invent the adventures of

princes, or the shifts of blackguards; there was no middle course. There were indeed admirable pieces of characterisation, as in Addison and Steele, deeply touched with emotion, but without a story to give them scope for display; there were pieces of pure narrative, as in Defoe, without interplay of character, and often without emotion. Then came a sudden development, as if (to use M. Chevalley's term) by an explosion of vital energy, in the work of Richardson, Fielding and Smollett, where the ordinary middle-class reader might find a picture of such a world as he himself frequented. Action, characterisation and sentiment were all exhibited in fusion.

Yet after this amazing efflorescence, from Richardson's *Pamela* in 1739 to Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* in 1771, English fiction unaccountably dropped back. It is true that Jane Austen was writing before the nineteenth century began, and her three first books were published before *Waverley*. But they made no immediate impression, nor did they enlarge the novel's scope. It was left for Scott to give this form of art a new character. Great events, high activities, intrigues and battles, were depicted on a scene where leaders and potentates moved and spoke with a dignity worthy of their fame. Fielding had spoken in jest of his *Tom Jones* as an epic; Scott's was the epic manner, without jesting. Yet, as Fielding had mixed on his stage people of all classes and conditions, so also did Scott; but with a different sense of their values. He did not fear to intermix broad comedy, and the common folk were chief contributors of it; but also the same *rather*—a work in *re* at times mouthpieces of noble tragedy, disposed of at thirty-the strictest sense, a historical publication. Two thousand Scotland in the grip of civil war. No uncounted equivalent had yet essayed so to blend truth and in veand in those days prose writer had so freely combined thain this kingdom at thrill and makes us admire with that whè staple reading of The plain truth is that Scott learnt moradmittedly by these then from all the novelists.) He knew *review*, in its notice of course; but there is no trace that Cervily regarded as among his method was never that of irony. re."

by heart; the words of Shakespeare are never for long out of his mouth. If one were tempted to press the comparison too far, his own words in his journal would rise up in judgment. "The fools compare me to Shakespeare: I am not worthy to untie the latchet of his brogues." Yet the Waverley Novels are—at however great a distance—the nearest things in literature to Shakespeare's historical plays. "Life is a spectacle for Scott rather than a problem," says M. Chevalley. Might not the same be said of Shakespeare—at least when he wrote *Henry IV*?

Prose fiction has masterpieces which rank with the highest forms of literature; so much as this will at least be conceded by anyone. Yet when Scott began to write fiction, he believed that his fellow Clerks of Session—all of them his intimate friends—would dislike the idea that one of their number should write a novel. Two generations later, Lord Beaconsfield thought such an exploit no discredit even to the position of a Prime Minister. Beyond doubt, Scott more than any man, perhaps more than all other men, had contributed to bring about this altered feeling.

It may help readers to realise the extraordinary change in estate which the novel has undergone since the early days of last century, if we consider the attitude of the *Edinburgh Review*, which in Scott's day was the leading organ of criticism. In the first twelve years of its existence, that is in the first forty-eight numbers, the editor only devoted ten reviews in all to novels; and of these, five were concerned with stories by Miss Edgeworth, an authoress of "continental" standing instruction." entitled her novels, "brilliant treatise *Le Roman*" contrast the work of *Le Roman* more consideration than is usually *n'était indigne du roman* description." Yet, almost every *roman ne soit digne* article at least to some work in verse, plexity of meanings, ets to be reviewed were of no greater before Walter Scott or Joanna Baillie, and often, indeed, wards; the greatest share has been a still more perfect sphere in which the re, then, no doubt, novelists doing selves. But also, b merit to Mrs. Opie's poems; but their *teenth century create* from the *Review's* survey because the two traditional uses; the deepest disrepute. Richardson,

Fielding, Goldsmith, and Sterne had each been followed by a crop of imitators, but had never established a school. The one writer of the eighteenth century who had succeeded in setting a fruitful example was Miss Burney, among whose disciples we may reckon Miss Edgeworth, and another lady who was far greater than Miss Edgeworth, but of whose productions the *Edinburgh* took no contemporary cognizance. Miss Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* appeared in 1811, and her five other books within the next decade; but it was not ~~th~~ much later that a first mention of them was made in the *Review's* pages. Yet among a wide circle of readers the vogue of the novel was then, relatively speaking, as great as at present."

"From the Minerva Press in Leadenhall Street," says Sir Walter Raleigh in his work on the English Novel (and the *Edinburgh Review*, noticing *Delphine*, bears him out by a contemptuous reference to this same institution), "romances poured forth in shoals during the years before the appearance of *Waverley*. Of this vast body of worthless literature the single characteristic is imitation—shameless and unintelligent—of the most popular English and French authors. Mrs. Radcliffe, Godwin, and 'Monk' Lewis, Rousseau, Madame de Staël, and the Baronne de Montolieu (whose best-known novel, *Caroline de Lichtfield*, had been early translated by Thomas Holcroft) furnished the stuff for innumerable silly composites of sentiment and horror. . . . It is worth noting that the largest and readiest sale was found by writers since forgotten."

Raleigh adds statistics. Two thousand copies of *Vicissitudes Abroad; or, the Ghost of my Father*—a work in six volumes by Mrs. A. M. Bennett—were disposed of at thirty-six shillings on the day of publication. Two thousand copies at thirty-six shillings may be counted equivalent to ten thousand at the modern price, and in those days the *Review* computed that "there are in this kingdom at least eighty thousand readers." The staple reading of these eighty thousand was afforded admittedly by these "works of fiction," which, said the *Review*, in its notice of *Tales of My Landlord*, "are generally regarded as among the lower productions of our literature."

But, as the reviewer then admitted, this summary classification had been upset by the apparition of *Waverley*, which was promptly hailed by Jeffrey as a work of genius. Yet it is not a little curious to note how gradually, and, as it were, grudgingly, the long-standing prejudice was relaxed. The reviewer of *The Black Dwarf* and *Old Mortality* was at some pains to explain that prose fictions might very conceivably prove preferable to epic poetry. "The great objection to them, indeed," he wrote, "is that they are too entertaining . . . and are so pleasant in the reading as to be apt to produce a disrelish for other kinds of reading which may be more necessary. Neither science nor authentic history, nor political nor professional instruction, can be conveyed in a popular tale." To this opinion (expressed in 1817) the *Review* adhered for a period, though noting in 1826 the continuously increasing application of talent to this branch of literature. "For every one good novel thirty or forty years back, there are now a dozen." But still the view was held that "the novel is only meant to please; it must do that or do nothing." When Mrs. Gore, in her *Women as They Are*, showed signs of writing something that should not be "a mere novel," but should convey information, the reviewer disparaged the attempt, maintaining that nothing should be in a novel which would appear tedious or displaced in a play. But in 1830 an article (dealing with various novels of military or naval life, by Marryat and other officers) opened with a full recantation of this heresy:

"This is truly a novel-writing age! . . . Persons of all ranks and professions, who feel that they can wield a pen successfully, now strive to embody the fruits of their observations in a work of fiction. One man makes a novel the vehicle for philosophical and political discussion; another smuggles in under similar disguise a book of travels, or, as in the case of two recent travellers in Turkey, first sends forth the record of his tour and then a novel by way of corollary."

The case of the officer, the critic goes on to show, is analogous; soldiers and sailors can now without breach of discip-

line give the world an insight into the very heart of military life. In short,

"it has been discovered that the novel is a very flexible and comprehensive form of composition, applicable to many purposes, and capable of combining much instruction with amusement. There is scarcely any subject, not either repulsive or of a very abstruse nature, which must be of necessity excluded from it."

Plainly, then, the status of the novel had been established as "a more creditable exercise of ability than it was previously considered"; and this change, as the *Review* said with great justice in the article from which these last words are quoted, was due to Scott.

I have insisted at some length upon this citation of contemporary opinion to emphasise what is imperfectly realised to-day—the importance of Scott's example, and the depth of the slough from which he dragged this admirable vehicle for thought. It is true that, before *Waverley* was written, Miss Austen had done, in silence and almost without recognition, five-sixths of her whole wonderful work. But Miss Austen, impeccable though she was, lacked what the greatest possess—that personal magnetism which kindles. Realising, perhaps more fully than any other, that the novel must rest on observation and experience, she confined herself to subjects lying within a scope so limited that nothing but sheer greatness could draw matter from it. She had no wide first-hand knowledge of life, no treasury of reading to draw upon such as Scott had; had she possessed the latter, she would scarce have utilised it, for fear of those artificialities and imperfections which Scott himself did not avoid. With Scott's resources, she would only have been a kind of glorified Galt; her mission was to intensify, not to extend, the range of observation. She might quicken the sense of comedy, and that human sympathy which lies so near it; she could not enlarge and nourish the imagination. It was for Scott to show outlying tracts of the world, and backward ranges of time, peopled with living creatures, who were not mere human abstractions, like the personages of French

tragedy; to carry abroad and into the past something of that noticing eye which makes the present living and significant, and to blend, as Shakespeare did, romance and comedy, high life and low life, into one many-coloured pattern.

And, dealing as he did from the first with Celtic peoples, where the point of honour is in no way confined to a caste, and where gentry is claimed by the bare-legged follower as well as by the chief, he went far to make an end of the conventional distinctions in art between the motives and the sentiments of gentle and simple, rich and poor. In a sense, Scott, the clansman, paved the way for Dickens, the cockney, and for the romance of familiar life.

It must be freely allowed that Scott had probably no intention of doing any such thing. No great man of letters, with the possible exception of Shakespeare, ever attached so light a value to his own productions as did the author of *Waverley*. He rehabilitated the novel, perhaps, less in his own eyes than in those of the world.

But when M. Chevalley says that Scott remained anonymous for thirteen years because he had *le sentiment d'avoir déchu*, a feeling that he had come down in the world, there is some misunderstanding. Scott was shy of signing a novel in the first instance because of the associations then attaching to this form of composition. The introductory chapter to *Waverley* shows him painfully aware of them. Such a title as "Mordaunt" "Belmore" or "Belgrave" would, says the anonymous Author, have led readers to expect "pages of inanity similar to those which have been so christened for half a century."

"I must modestly admit that I am too diffident of my merit to place it in opposition to preconceived associations, and I have therefore, like a maiden knight with his white shield, assumed for my hero Waverley, an uncontaminated name."

It may be inferred, with no great stretch of ingenuity, that when Scott chose to write a novel, at a time when the presumption ran that a novel was a silly book, he preferred not only to carry an unblazoned shield but to be nameless. He was not confident enough of success to risk his laurels

earned in a different field upon this new one—where the honour seemed like to be less, and defeat might entail ridicule.

But once his own instinct—which, as has been shown, constantly pushed him towards this way of writing—had received the justification of success, there is not the least ground for believing that Scott felt himself to have stepped into a lower sphere. He was very far indeed from rating his novels as high as he rated other people's poetry; but he certainly did not think them inferior to his own poetry, of which he was never a partisan.

This Introduction to *Waverley* is well worth study, because it was part and parcel of the original publication. And it is as well to say here, at the outset, that the *Waverley* Novels are terribly handicapped for the ordinary reader because they are generally reprinted from the collected edition of 1830. To this Scott—for good reasons of finance—added masses of commentary and illustration, which get between the reader and the story. The most desirable way to celebrate the centenary of his death would be to bring out a good edition reproducing the novels as they originally appeared. At the head of them *Waverley* would open, not as in the copy before me, with ninety-six pages of general Preface and eight more of Introduction, followed by yet another eight of "Preface to the Third Edition," but with "Chapter I., Introductory," which consists of six pages in all, and sets out the purpose which Scott had in mind.

First, in regard to the sub-title, "'Tis Sixty Years Since" ("before this present 1st November, 1805"—for he left the date to stand on which he began, at Ashestiel) he explains that it commits him to "more a description of men than of manners." A tale of manners, to be interesting, must either refer to "antiquity so great as to have become venerable" or to contemporary life. The manners—and costumes of sixty years back are simply out of fashion; and therefore the force of the narrative must be thrown "upon the characters and passions of the actors—those passions common



to men in all stages of society." The romance and the comedy must therefore depend for success on their truth to humanity. "It is from the great book of Nature . . . that I have venturously essayed to read a chapter to the public." In short this romancer claims to be a realist: to be founded on the broad facts of life.

But to make truth interesting, it must be artfully set out; and Scott indicates at once the device on which he relied, not only in *Waverley*, but throughout his career. "Some favourable opportunities of contrast have been afforded me by the state of society in the northern part of the island at the period of my history."

In this his first venture, wanting to show Scotland, so as to obtain the greatest effect of contrast, he showed it as appearing to the eyes of a young Englishman. Later, he was content without this violence of opposition—though it recurs in the early part of his second novel, *Guy Mannering*. But the Scotland which he chose first to illustrate was the Gaelic Scotland which had enchanted his own youth by its strangeness; and perhaps *Waverley* was responsible for the superstition, which had become widespread long before Scott's own death, that every Scot wore the kilt. Yet even here, he himself was better pleased from the first with his own pictures of the Scots who were Lowland bred: If they were soldiers, he loved the horsemen rather than the target-bearing Highlanders; and if they were not, then Andrew Fairservice, the gardener, or Bailie MacWheeble, limb of the law, was more to him than Donal Bean or Evan MacCombich.

The story that he chose to tell was, inevitably, that which had been always before the mind of his boyhood—the story of "the Forty-Five." The first battle he narrated in prose was a battle in which Scotland won the day. But when he came to tell it, he threw back into the past fluctuations of his own modern mind. *Waverley* demands study from those who would know Scott, for it is of the novels by far the most touched with self-study.

The first seven chapters—written so long before the rest—include one entirely devoted to the hero's education,

James Ballantyne, when the manuscript was submitted to him, took exception to this, saying that he did not see how it should interest readers; and artistically, he was quite right. It does not appreciably help on the story. But it tells how (though in circumstances no way like Scott's own) a boy received an education very like Walter Scott's. Edward Waverley as a boy had "powers of apprehension so quick as almost to resemble intuition," but he was liable to "overrun his game"—that is, to acquire knowledge "in a slight, flimsy and inadequate manner." He would not work unless "for some strong motive of gratification"; once he mastered a classical author "so far as to understand the story," he would finish the volume if it pleased him, but "it was vain to attempt fixing his attention on critical distinctions of philology," or "the beauty of felicitous expression." And (so comments Scott, the man grown, who knew himself book-learned yet no scholar) "he foresaw not that he was losing for ever the opportunity of acquiring habits of firm and assiduous application, or gaining the art of controlling, directing and concentrating the powers of his mind for earnest investigation."—In short, he was in the way to be educated as an artist, and not as (for instance) a successful barrister.—Further, since there were books in abundance, "young Waverley drove through the sea of books like a vessel without a pilot or a rudder." And so he "read and stored in a memory of uncommon tenacity much curious though ill-arranged and miscellaneous information." He was "master of Shakespeare and Milton—and particularly well acquainted with Spenser, Drayton and other poets who have exercised themselves on romantic fiction. . . . In this respect his acquaintance with Italian opened him a yet wider range." Then he had read romantic poems from the days of Pulci, and the *novelle*, brought forth in emulation of *The Decameron*. In classical literature he had read the usual authors: "the French had afforded him an almost exhaustless collection of memoirs . . . the splendid pages of Froissart . . . those of Brantôme and De la Noue . . . The Spanish had contributed to his stock of chivalrous and romantic lore . . . The earlier

literature of the northern nations did not escape the study of one who read rather to awaken the imagination than to benefit the understanding."

What other young man except Edward Waverley—and Walter Scott—ever went through this course of reading in his teens? And what has all this detail to do with a story of the Insurrection and Charles Edward or his Highland backers? Plainly, we find here the novelist, when he tries his prentice hand, indulging in the natural temptation to detailed self-portraiture.—There is probably a touch 'of autobiography, too, in this reference to the field sports by which Waverley's old uncle tried to correct "habits of abstraction and love of solitude.

"Although Edward eagerly carried his gun for one season, yet when practice had given him some dexterity the pastime ceased to afford amusement." Then came a suggestion from "the perusal of old Isaac Walton." But "of all diversions . . . fishing is the worst qualified to amuse a man who is at once indolent and impatient; and so our hero's rod was flung aside."

"Hero" in this context is simply a term of art; when the book was finished and published and famous, Scott wrote to Morritt:

"The hero is a sneaking piece of imbecility; and if he had married Flora, she would have set him up upon the chimney-piece, as the Polish Dwarf's wife used to do with him. I am a bad hand at depicting a hero properly so called, and have an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of Borderers, buccaneers, Highland robbers, and all others of a Robin-Hood description. I do not know why it should be, as I am myself, like Hamlet, indifferent honest; but I suppose the blood of the old cattle-drivers of Teviotdale continues to stir in my veins."

That is not fair on the young gentleman who fought like a man at Prestonpans; but it illustrates the duality of Scott's nature, and it suggests that, as he certainly identified the youthful mind of Edward Waverley with his own, so he continued throughout to depict in his hero that side of his own nature which he kept strenuously hidden. He

paints the deep and increasing sensibility which made shyness painful; "for perhaps even guilt itself does not impress upon some minds so keen a sense of shame and remorse as a modest sensitive and inexperienced youth feels, from the consciousness of having neglected etiquette or excited ridicule."—There was nothing in the story which Scott had to tell that prompted this observation; one infers that he was pursuing the retrospective study of an imaginative young man's growth. Passages occur in the journal of his last years which imply that in youth Walter Scott, like Edward Waverley, "supposed that he disliked and was unfitted for society merely because he had not yet acquired the habit of living in it with ease, and comfort, and of reciprocally giving and receiving pleasure."

Scott indeed justifies his insistence on these traits: he does not propose, "in imitation of the romance of Cervantes," to describe a bias given by education which ends in "total perversion of intellect"—but only "that more common aberration from sound judgment which apprehends occurrences indeed in their reality, but communicates to them a tincture of its own romantic tint and colouring." Even in Scott's mature manhood, it is hard to say how much of his trouble may have sprung from this tendency to see things rose-coloured. He was very reticent about his dreams, and probably he learnt reticence early. Edward Waverley sought no confidant; "had he been asked to choose between any punishment short of ignominy and the necessity of giving a cold and composed account of the ideal world in which he lived the better part of his days, I think he would not have hesitated to prefer the former infliction. The secrecy became increasingly precious as he felt in advancing life the influence of the awakening passions. Female forms of exquisite grace and beauty began to mingle his mental adventures."—Surely, Scott is writing of himself.

Once the young man has been launched on his travels, and has knocked at the Baron of Bradwardine's hall door, other figures crowd on to the stage, and fill it with their exuberant vitality. Scott forgets his hero; though now and then he remembers that his hero would have been shy

and silent in company: Fergus MacIvor once comments on the trait.

At last, far on in the tale, after the skirmish in the retreat from Derby, when Fergus and Waverley are separated, and the Englishman, escaping, finds a refuge by Ullswater, with leisure to look back, there comes one of those sentences which seem to detach themselves from the web of fiction and let us hear Scott speaking to himself.—The young man had already submitted to his rejection by Flora, and was well on the way to think of marriage with Rose Bradwardine; he had also to face the fact that the rebellion in which he was concerned was flickering out, and, further, the disconcerting reflection that perhaps he would not desire it to be otherwise. Things were shaping themselves quite otherwise than he desired: but he felt able to confront them; “entitled to say firmly, though perhaps with a sigh, that the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced.”

There must have come a time, I think, when Scott so summed up the situation. Or perhaps, now in his mature age, looking back over life, on the visionary marriage that he aspired to, and on the course that active years had led him since the day when he had shut out that dream, he wrote this epitaph over his far-away youth.

One thing anyhow is certain. In the narrative of Charles Edward’s campaign and of Waverley’s part in it, Scott most surely threw himself back into the past and asked how he, with all his Jacobite sympathies would have felt, had he been actually involved. For, strong as the romantic Jacobite feeling persisted in him, even stronger was the solid British loyalty. No words could overpraise the skill with which the story suggests the appeal of the rising cause and of its leader. If ever writer could make a prince seem princely on the printed page, Scott was he; and he never excelled this first presentment of a hereditary sovereign. But even finer, perhaps, is the art which suggests how Waverley at first shrinks from a struggle in which he—unlike the Highlanders—must fight against his own blood and friends; which makes our sympathies change, like his,

when the Scots, fresh from victory in their own land, sweep down to overrun the fair counties where they are strangers. The historian in Scott realises that Charles Edward found no welcome from the English people, and the novelist makes his hero perceive this coldness; more and more he finds it impossible to make the figure, so far identified with himself, have a desire for victory over anything that is English.—And so in spite of himself he can make Waverley into nothing but the “half-hearted piece of imbecility” that he describes with a laugh to Morritt. Even in retrospect he could not be a thorough-paced Jacobite: civil war was abhorrent to him.

There is no other novel in the whole series where so much attempt is made at a psychological study of the hero as this first one. Morton in *Old Mortality* shows the same fluctuation, for the same reasons: Scott cannot make him wholly of either side. Yet there is scarcely one of the novels in which the official hero is other than some sort of projection of Scott himself: a modest but courageous young man whose personal career we follow with interest because it is linked up with happenings in which there figure many other characters, strongly individualised and portrayed. These creatures, entirely detached from their creator, can go to the very uttermost in any quarrel, whether of civil or foreign war, or of private quarrel. But it seems evident that Scott's machinery would not work for him unless he put himself in this position, at once central and subordinate, of the man through whose eyes all must be seen; and it is more than probable that he found it impossible to make a serious study of this figure with, <sup>at</sup> departing from that reticence which was so deep in grain with him.

The exception to the rule of his procedure is the *Heart of Midlothian*, where the central actor is a woman; and how different in that case the result! No character in all his books is more thoroughly portrayed than Jeanie Deans.

Since much has already been quoted in this volume which two generations of English and Scotch knew by heart, it may be permissible to quote also one brief passage from the scene which describes how the captured rebel, Fergus

MacIvor, and his Highland henchman were side by side in the dock. The chieftain has spoken his defence to the Court, and has sat down in obdurate silence.

"Evan Maccombich looked at him with great earnestness, and, rising up, seemed anxious to speak; but the confusion of the court, and the perplexity arising from thinking in a language different from that in which he was to express himself, kept him silent. There was a murmur of compassion among the spectators, from the idea that the poor fellow intended to plead the influence of his superior as an excuse for his crime. The Judge commanded silence, and encouraged Evan to proceed.

'I was only ganging to say, my lord,' said Evan, in what he meant to be an insinuating manner, 'that if your excellent honour, and the honourable Court, would let Vich Ian Vohr go free just this once, and let him gae back to France, and no to trouble King George's government again, that ony six o' the very best of his clan will be willing to be justified in his stead; and if you'll just let me gae down to Glennaquoich, I'll fetch them up to ye mysell, to head or hang, and you may begin wi' me the very first man.'

Notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion, a sort of laugh was heard in the court at the extraordinary nature of the proposal. The Judge checked this indecency, and Evan, looking sternly around, when the murmur abated, 'If the Saxon gentlemen are laughing,' he said, 'because a poor man, such as me, thinks my life, or the life of six of my degree, is worth that of Vich Ian Vohr, it's like enough they may be very right; but if they laugh because they think I would not keep my word, and come back to redeem him, I can tell them they ken neither the heart of a Hielandman, nor the honour of a gentleman.'

There was no further inclination to laugh among the audience, and a dead sience ensued.

The Judge then pronounced upon both prisoners the sentence of the law of high treason, with all its horrible accompaniments. The execution was appointed for the ensuing day. 'For you, Fergus MacIvor,' continued the Judge, 'I can hold out no hope of mercy. You must prepare against to-morrow for your last sufferings here, and your great audit hereafter.'

'I desire nothing else, my lord,' answered Fergus, in the same manly and firm tone.

The hard eyes of Evan, which had been perpetually bent on his Chief, were moistened with a tear. 'For you, poor ignorant man,' continued the Judge, 'who, following the ideas in which you have been educated, have this day given us a

striking example how the loyalty due to the King and State alone, is, from your unhappy ideas of clanship, transferred to some ambitious individual, who ends by making you the tool of his crimes—for you, I say, I feel so much compassion, that if you can make up your mind to petition for grace, I will endeavour to procure it for you. Otherwise——’

‘Grace me no grace,’ said Evan; ‘since you are to shed Vich Ian Vohr’s blood, the only favour I would accept from you, is—to bid them loose my hands and gie me my claymore, and bide you just a minute sitting where you are!’

‘Remove the prisoners,’ said the Judge; ‘his blood be upon his own head.’”

There has been no temptation to quote the chieftain’s speech, delivered in swelling phrase, of what Scott’s contemporaries might have called “high English.” Here, as in a hundred instances, the height of tragic dignity is reached by utterance of one who must use a plainer vocabulary. Scott agreed with Wordsworth that the speech of peasants came nearer the true style of poetry than the more sophisticated language of higher classes. He knew also—as Thomas Hardy knew and proved—that peasant speech is often more highly coloured and imaginative than that which comes natural to what are called “the educated.” But in this instance the poetry is not in the turn of a phrase: Evan Dhu is no master of Scots. The poetry is there in essence, in the perfect fitness of a spoken gesture which sums up not only a brave man, but a race.

*Waverley* has the advantage over many of the other novels in being brought to a close with some ingenuity and in a manner entirely characteristic; for it shows where Scott’s heart was. More to him was the old Baron of Bradwardine, cavalryman, antiquarian and genealogist, than all the puffing Highlanders with their pibrochs and their perpetual bickering; and as the real story began (after the long preliminary chapters written in 1805) with the Bear of Bradwardine, so we come back to it for the last word.

Nothing can so well render the impression that the book made as a couple of letters of Miss Edgeworth’s. The first is dated October 13th, 1814.



"We went to Coolure, and had a pleasant day. *Waverley* was in everybody's hands. The Admiral does not like it. The hero, he says, is such a shuffling fellow. While he was saying this I had in my pocket a letter from Miss Fanshaw received that morning saying it was delightful. . . . Mr. and Mrs. Pollard brought with them Miss Napier. We talked over *Waverley* with her. I am more delighted with it than I can tell you; it is a work of first rate genius."

In short, all the world was buzzing with *Waverley*; but the book was still only in the reading at Edgeworthstown. —Ten days later, October 23rd, a letter from Edgeworthstown was addressed "To the Author of *Waverley*—Aut Scotus aut Diabolus."

"We have this moment finished *Waverley*. It was read aloud to this large family, and I wish the author could have witnessed the impression it made."

Then follows a brilliant and discriminating laudation—with a couple of shrewd and helpful criticisms thrown in. These indeed would have been almost a presumption but that the "Author of *Waverley*" had given Maria Edgeworth full right to address him, when he thus described his purpose:

"The Lowland Scottish gentlemen, and the subordinate characters, are not given as individual portraits, but are drawn from the general habits of the period, of which I have witnessed some remnants in my younger days, and partly gathered from tradition.

It has been my object to describe these persons, not by a caricatured and exaggerated use of the national dialect, but by their habits, manners, and feelings; so as in some distant degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth, so different from the 'Teagues' and 'dear joys,' who, so long, with the most perfect family resemblance to each other, occupied the drama and the novel."

These observations come in the Inscription of the volume to Scott's friend Henry Mackenzie, the veteran of Edinburgh letters; and manifestly they were written after the book was printed off, for they appear in a "Postscript which ought

to have been a Preface." The unforeseen result of this was to provide Maria Edgeworth with the most charming surprise in literary history. She recounted it herself, at the end of her praise and her censure :

"Believe me, I have not, nor can I convey to you the full idea of the pleasure, the delight we have had in reading *Waverley*, nor of the feeling of sorrow with which we came to the end of the history of persons whose real presence had so filled our minds. We felt that we must return to the *flat realities* of life, that our stimulus was gone, and we were little disposed to read the 'Postscript which should have been a Preface.'

'Well, let us hear it,' said my father, and Mrs. Edgeworth read on :

Oh! my dear sir, how much pleasure would my father, my mother, my whole family, as well as myself have lost if we had not read to the last page! And the pleasure came upon us so unexpectedly—we had been so completely absorbed that any thought of ourselves, of our own authorship was far away.

Thank you for the honour you have done us, and for the pleasure you have given us, great in proportion to the opinion we had formed of the work we had just perused—and believe me every opinion I have in this letter expressed was formed before any individual in the family had peeped to the end of the book, or knew how much we owed you.

"Your obliged and grateful,

"MARIA EDGEWORTH."

## CHAPTER XII

### "THE LORD OF THE ISLES"

1814-15

THE yachting trip, which carried Scott out of the track of society, when society was all agog about the new and nameless author, has left its results in two works of very different quality: one being his poem, *The Lord of the Isles*, the other a Journal which is printed in Lockhart. The Muse takes precedence.

It was in the autumn of 1813 that Scott actually began the first Canto of a metrical romance which was to recount the fortunes of Robert Bruce, and to describe the Battle of Bannockburn. *Waverley*, as well as other enterprises, pushed it aside, but the scheme was clear in his mind, and indeed had been formed long before the writing started. After all, it was but natural that the Minstrel of Flodden should desire to celebrate also the field where the English did not win the day. He wrote to Morritt on September 14th, 1814:

"I will attend to your corrections in *Waverley*. My principal employment for the autumn will be reducing the knowledge I have acquired of the localities of the islands into scenery and stage-room for the *Lord of the Isles*, of which renowned romance I think I have repeated some portions to you. It was elder born than *Rokeby*, though it gave place to it in publishing.

"After all, scribbling is an odd propensity. I don't believe there is any ointment, even that of the *Edinburgh Review*, which can cure the infected."

By that time three Cantos had been completed, and on December 16th the whole was with Ballantynes' printers.

But it must be remembered that Scott had greatly the habit of composing out of doors, and with his prodigious memory there was no need to set down verses, or even cantos, as they framed themselves. During the yachting tour, he was beyond all doubt acquiring impressions, seizing upon striking details, and fixing in his mind the general lie of that island-studded coast; but he was also, though without pretentiousness, the Bard. Lockhart quotes significant testimony from Erskine who was of the company:

"I often, on coming up from the cabin at night, found him pacing the deck rapidly, muttering to himself—and went to the fore-castle, lest my presence should disturb him. I remember, that at Loch Corriskin, in particular, he seemed quite overwhelmed with his feelings; and we all saw it, and, retiring unnoticed, left him to roam and gaze about by himself, until it was time to muster the party and be gone."

I wish I could get pleasure from the poem; and if those names of mountain and island and tiderace and jutting rock were homely to me, I should; it is hard to believe that Highland Scots can be indifferent to what such a man pictured with such ardour. One passage at least there is of which I can form no critical estimate, for I cannot remember when I did not know the stanzas by heart; it is that which tells how the Lord of the Isles set sail northwards from Coriskin to raise his clansmen from the "far off Hebrides"; and its stanzas are as fresh from the sea:

'Merrily, merrily bounds the bark,  
 She bounds before the gale,  
 The mountain breeze from Ben-na-darch  
 Is joyous in her sail!  
 With fluttering sound like laughter hoarse,  
 The cords and canvas strain,  
 The waves, divided by her force,  
 In rippling eddies chased her course  
 As if they laugh'd again.

Not down the breeze more blithely flew,  
 Skimming the wave, the light sea-mew,  
 Than the gay galley bore  
 Her course upon that favouring wind,  
 And Coolin's crest has sunk behind,  
 And Slapin's cavern'd shore."

Yet when all is said, the poem, as compared with the three first, is imperfectly vitalised; and as a story it is inferior to *Rokeby*. Compare Flodden in *Marmion* with Bannockburn here, and it is like the difference between *Waverley* and *Anne of Geierstein*.

But if life be gone out of the poem, as I fear is true, the *Journal* is as much alive as one of Horace Walpole's letters. Lockhart says very justly that nothing can give us a fuller idea of Scott; and it is amazing that no publisher has yet had the idea of bringing this out as a small separate volume, with appropriate commentary by one who knows the scenes in intimate detail. No half knowledge would do here, for Scott writes with as close observation as if he were Arthur Young investigating the state of agriculture and of society in France or Ireland. As an illustration to the *Journal*, the *Lord of the Isles* should be added, that those who were curious to do so might compare the immediate record of impressions on such a man with the finished utterance in verse; and *The Pirate* also should be plundered, to show what he made of these scenes in prose of a tale.

Scot<sup>ns</sup> d from Leith on July 29th on board the Lighth<sup>Att</sup> Attendant, a cutter carrying six guns and a crew of ten, commanded by Captain Wilson. On board were the three commissioners, Hamilton, Sheriff of Lanarkshire, Erskine, Sheriff of Orkney and Shetland, and Duff, Sheriff of Forfarshire. With these were three guests: Scott, a young Mr. Marjoribanks, son to the Provost of Edinburgh, and the Reverend Mr. Turnbull, who was to be set down at his presbytery of Tingwall, in Shetland. With them, and in charge of all, was Stevenson, the Surveyor of the Lights, whose name, already famous for the

lighthouses he built, was to be spread over the world by his grandson—who in another sense was Scott's grandson, too.

They sailed north up the east coast of Scotland, visiting lighthouses as they went, in bad weather. "All sick, even Mr. Stevenson. God grant this occurs seldom." It did not happen again to Scott, though his fellow-passengers were less strong-stomached.

As far north as the Moray Firth, Scott was seeing from the water what he knew well from the land. At Arbroath, where is the Abbey of Aberbrothock, he notes:

"I visited the Abbey church for the third time, the first being with—*cheu!* the second with T. Thomson."

Whenever a scene recalled the lady of his first love, there seems always to have stirred in him something like this *cheu!*

New experience began after they had stretched from the Moray Firth for Shetland, and found themselves in Lerwick harbour. Then follows a mass of detail about the primitive system of land tenure which existed throughout these islands, once Scandinavian-settled; about their very odd mills, their primitive ploughing, their way of taxes—and the "monstrous proportion of foreign luxuries" in use among the half-fisherman, half-farmer folk. "Tea in particular is used by all ranks, and porridge quite exploded."

Then the antiquarian had to report on Pictish castles—with infinite detail; on the formidable tradition (to be used with effect later in *The Pirate*) that a man saved from drowning is sure to injure his preserver; on the sword-dance surviving on the island of Papa; on the strange boats of the Fair Isle; and on the return of Dutch fishermen to Lerwick after the long break during Napoleon's wars.

Orkney had its Gothic buildings, its "Saxon" cathedral, and its megalithic monuments, the Standing Stones of Stennis. At Stromness they bought a fair wind from the old

Pythoness who sold it them—and who did not keep faith. She also reappeared in *The Pirate*, but strangely transfigured as Norna. Yet more serious was his concern with questions of the people. Orkney had good land, and the people dealt little in fishing; but the land was all let to very small holders, with neither knowledge nor capital to form property. Bigger and fewer farms were the obvious remedy; but—

“How is the necessary restriction to take place, without the greatest immediate distress and hardship to these poor creatures? It is the hardest chapter in Economicks; and if I were an Orcadian laird, I feel I should shuffle on with the old useless creatures, in contradiction to my better judgment.”

Once at the Pentland Firth, they began the exploration of the wild cliffs about Cape Wrath, and Scott gives an elaborate description of the huge cave, *Uamh Smowe* (as he spells it). There was much scrambling, and Scott, in trying to ascend with Erskine to where a cascade fell into the inner cavern, took the wrong side of the rocks and got on to a cliff “where Erskine to my great alarm turned giddy and declared he would go no farther.” Scott himself got up, and sent a couple of helpers with a rope to his friend. There was never a hardier or more passionate pursuer of such sights.

But landing at Cape Wrath brought back the human problem. Lord Reay’s estate had in part been let to a sheep-farmer who was making a great profit; evidently the same could be done over 150,000 square acres and a huge increase of rent obtained.

“But to effect this reform in the present instance, Lord Reay must turn out several hundred families who have lived under him and his fathers for many generations, and the swords of whose fathers probably won the lands from which he is now expelling them. He is a good-natured man, I suppose, for Mr. A. says he is hesitating whether he shall not take a more moderate rise (£7,000 or £8,000), and keep his Highland tenantry. This last war (before the short peace), he levied a fine fencible corps (the Reay fencibles), and might have doubled their number.

*Wealth* is no doubt *strength* in a country, while all is quiet and governed by law, but on any altercation or internal commotion, it ceases to be strength, and is only the means of tempting the strong to plunder the possessors. Much may be said on both sides."

Down the West Coast, Scott was in Gaelic-speaking country, and in the full tradition for his poem—and for more than his poem; in Harris he was on the traces of Charles Edward, still fresh in memory; it was not long since the old man who housed the fugitive adventurer had died. At Macleod's castle of Dunvegan the last of the hereditary MacCrimmon pipers was still alive, but had entered the army, and refused to keep on the traditional college for pipe music.

On Eigg the party visited the cave where an earlier Macleod destroyed two hundred MacDonalds, man, woman and child, by suffocating them with smoke. The bones still lay there, and Scott insisted on taking away a skull—after which they had a succession of foul winds, and Captain Wilson did not conceal his opinion of the reason why.

They suffered from it exceedingly off Tyree, where the yacht was beating up because Stevenson was determined that the Commissioners should see a reef of rocks on which he wanted to put a lighthouse. The Commissioners all said that they would agree to anything rather than be so tossed; but Stevenson persisted for a visit in due form, and accordingly two of the Commissioners, Scott of course accompanying, managed to make a landing through a heavy swell close to "a tremendous surf dashing over black pointed rocks."

"Our rowers, however, get the boat into a quiet creek between two rocks, where we contrive to land well wetted. I saw nothing remarkable in my way, excepting several seals, which we might have shot, but, in the doubtful circumstances of the landing, we did not care to bring guns. We took possession of the rock in name of the Commissioners, and generously bestowed our own great names on its crags and creeks. The rock was carefully



measured by Mr. S. It will be a most desolate position for a lighthouse—the Bell Rock and Eddystone a joke to it, for the nearest land is the wild island of Tyree, at fourteen miles' distance. So much for the Skerry Vhor."

So much for that moment; but Skerryvore was the name that Robert Louis Stevenson gave to his first house; for he thought that the lighthouse on Skerry Vhor was the finest deed of his forbears.

When the party "came on board proud of their achievement," the yacht was put about and ran for Iona, and the burial-place of the Kings of Scotland.

"The vast number of carved tombs containing the reliques of the great, exceeds credibility. In general, even in the most noble churches, the number of the vulgar dead exceed in all proportion the few of eminence who are deposited under monuments. Iona is in all respects the reverse: until lately, the inhabitants of the isle did not presume to mix their vulgar dust with that of chiefs, reguli, and abbots.

Macbeth is said to have been the last King of Scotland here buried—sixty preceded him, all doubtless as powerful in their day, but now unknown—*carent quia vate sacro*. A few weeks' labour of Shakespeare, an obscure player, has done more for the memory of Macbeth, than all the gifts, wealth, and monuments of this cemetery of princes have been able to secure to the rest of its inhabitants. It also occurred to me in Iona (as it has on many similar occasions) that the traditional recollections concerning the monks themselves are wonderfully faint, contrasted with the beautiful and interesting monuments of architecture which they have left behind them. In Scotland, particularly, the people have frequently traditions wonderfully vivid of the persons and achievements of ancient warriors, whose towers have long been levelled with the soil. But of the monks of Melrose, Kelso, Aberbrothock, Iona, &c., &c., they can tell nothing but that such a race existed, and inhabited the stately ruins of these monasteries. The quiet, slow, and uniform life of those recluse beings, glided on, it may be, like a dark and silent stream, fed from unknown resources, and vanishing from the eye without leaving any marked trace of its course. The life of the chieftain was a mountain torrent thundering over rock and precipice, which, less deep and profound in itself, leaves on the minds of the terrified spectators those deep impressions of awe and wonder which are most readily handed down to posterity."

From Scotland they stood across to Ulster, failed to beat up Lough Foyle, and were dining at Portrush when Scott in casual talk heard "with inexpressible surprise and distress" that his beautiful chieftainess was dead. His journal of the next day begins:

"5th September, 1814.

"Wake, or rather rise at six, for I have waked the whole night, or fallen into broken sleeps only to be hag-ridden by the nightmare. Go ashore with a heavy heart, to see sights which I had much rather leave alone."

So, with little care for pleasantness, he visited Dunluce and the Giant's Causeway.

"Our party brought off some curious joints of the columns, and, had I been quite as I am wont to be, I would have selected four to be capitals of a rustic porch at Abbotsford. But, alas! alas! I am much out of love with vanity at this moment."

The remaining pages of his Journal lack the exhilaration of the earlier, but he continued to note whatever was of historic or topographical interest. Leaving the yacht at Greenock, for the first time he set foot on a steamer and went up to Glasgow:

"a journey which we performed at the rate of about eight miles an hour, and with a smoothness of motion which probably resembles flying."

The last note is that through the whole cruise of six weeks there was not a trace of friction. "Each seemed anxious to submit his own wishes to those of his friends."

"Thus ends my little excursion, in which, bating one circumstance, which must have made me miserable for the time wherever I had learned it, I have enjoyed as much pleasure as in any six weeks of my life."

His first care on reaching Glasgow was to write to the Duke of Buccleuch a letter of very manly, touching and

affectionate sympathy. Only a day or two later did he find that the widower, foreseeing his friend's grief and distress, had written the news to meet him on landing. In a letter to Morritt, with whom he used little reserve, he described the Duke's letter and added:

"I am going to see him, and how we shall meet, God knows; but though 'an iron man of iron mould' upon many of the occasions of life in which I see people most affected, and a peculiar contemner of the commonplace sorrow which I see paid to the departed, this is a case in which my stoicism will not serve me. They both gave me reason to think they loved me, and I returned their regard with the most sincere attachment—the distinction of rank being, I think, set apart on all sides. But God's will be done. I will dwell no longer upon this subject."

One of the things which passed at this meeting when it took place is recorded by Lockhart. Hogg had written to the Duchess asking her to help him to the lease of a farm.

"A single line from a certain very great and very beautiful lady, would ensure that small pendicle to the bard at once. But she will grant no such thing! I appeal to your Grace if she is not a very bad lady that? I am your Grace's ever obliged and grateful

"JAMES HOGG,  
"THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD."

The Duchess handed over this epistle to Scott, asking him to discuss it with the Duke; now after her death, the matter came up again. "I must now consider this poor man's case as her legacy," said the Duke; and so within a short while, Hogg became tenant of Altrive, on the braes of Yarrow.

In a sense, Scott's feeling for this chieftainness of his clan was coloured with the fanciful pageantry in which he indulged his imagination. He liked to play at being a vassal and at rendering homage. But manifestly the reality of a woman's goodness and beauty had transformed this into a most genuine devotion and pride. *The Lord*

*of the Isles* preserves—though with no felicity of skill, yet with manifest sincerity—a record of this feeling. Evidently it had been designed that it should appear as dedicated to the Duchess; instead, the poem ended with this "Conclusion":

"Go forth, my Song, upon thy venturous way;  
Go boldly forth; nor yet thy master blame,  
Who chose no patron for his humble lay,  
And graced thy numbers with no friendly name,  
Whose partial zeal might smooth thy path to fame.  
*There was*—and O! how many sorrows crowd  
Into these two brief words!—*there was* a claim  
By generous friendship given; had fate allow'd,  
It well had bid thee rank the proudest of the proud!

All angel now; yet little less than all,  
While still a pilgrim in our world below!  
What 'vails it us that patience to recall,  
Which had its own to soothe all other woe;  
What 'vails to tell, how Virtue's purest glow  
Shone yet more lovely in a form so fair:  
And, least of all, what 'vails the world should know  
That one poor garland, twined to deck thy hair,  
Is hung upon thy hearse, to droop and wither there!"

*The Lord of the Isles*, as compared even with *Rokeby*, marked a falling off in the popular fervour for Scott's poetry. A few days after the poem was published, he asked Ballantyne: "What are people saying about the *Lord of the Isles*?" The printer hesitated. "I see how it is, the result is given in one word—*Disappointment*.—Since one line has failed, we must just stick to something else," was his comment.—A couple of days later, Ballantyne picked up from Scott's table a copy of Byron's *Giaour*, with an autograph inscription, "To the Monarch of Parnassus from one of his subjects." This, it should be noted, represents accurately how in popular opinion Scott stood in these years; for Wordsworth and Coleridge had attained no comparable ascendant; Shelley and Keats were still unknown. Byron, and Byron only, was the challenger, and his romantic tales—which owed an incalculable deal

to Scott's example—were being snatched from hand to hand. When Scott saw Ballantyne with the *Giaour* in his hand, "James," he said, "Byron hits the mark where I don't even pretend to fledge my arrow."

So far as the *Tales* go, Scott's critical estimate was probably, (and not for the hundredth time) mistaken. There was no doubt an element of disappointment in his own mind. In the very end of his days he put it shorter to Sir William Gell who asked why he gave up writing poetry: "Byron *bet* me," he said. And he added "He *bet* me out of the field in the description of the strong passions, and in deep-seated knowledge of the human heart; so I gave up poetry for the time." The least jealous of men does not like to feel himself beaten; and Scott probably suffered some temporary spleen. But reasons enough have been already given to show that the prose romance offered satisfactions to his own artist nature that the poems had never afforded him. Had Scott ever at any time been convinced—as was Wordsworth, as was Shelley, as was Keats—of the reality and importance attaching to his own poetic gift, the answer, "Byron *bet* me," would have been his condemnation. There was, however, no such inner urgency moving him. If he was going to write—and indeed, write he must—he would write that which gave him most pleasure to write and the public most pleasure to read. Higher than this he never put his purposes—except indeed in so far as it was his design and desire to celebrate his native land. But that mission, he might well hold, was already fully accomplished, when he turned to novel writing; and in the new field, though avoiding the passions on which Byron concentrated, he displayed a knowledge of the human heart beside which Byron's, to me at least, seems shallow and restricted.

## CHAPTER XIII

### "GUY MANNERING": AND DOGS

1814-15

IN the course of 1814 Scott, as has been told, finished his *Swift*; wrote two long articles for the *Encyclopædia*, raced through two-thirds of *Waverley*, and then composed nearly all of *The Lord of the Isles*. In addition, he threw in a Memoir of the Somervilles (Lord Somerville was his opposite neighbour across the Tweed at Abbotsford); and there was the reprint of an old treatise of 1611, "on letting off the humours of blood in the head vein" to be annotated. So on Christmas Day he wrote to Constable that he was "setting out for Abbotsford to refresh the machine." He refreshed it by writing *Guy Mannering* in a matter of six weeks; the book appeared on February 24th, 1815.

As usual, the devil drove him; John Ballantyne had more bills coming due; the bookselling business, laden with Beaumont and Fletcher and suchlike unsaleables, hung about their necks like a millstone. Longmans, who bought the novel, had to take also five hundred pounds' worth of this dead matter—so much out of Scott's pocket.

But no man of sense would believe that *Guy Mannering* was written only to pay off bills; if ever a work spoke of its author's enjoyment, this is the one. There may be another novel as good in the long series; I cannot believe that there is a better. For this occasion, Scott had no historical subject to expound; he was writing of his own country, his Borders, with an occasional excursion into his own native city and the purlieus of the courts where his official work

lay. He was telling a story of violent incidents, yet incidents no way impossible in the old-fashioned world which he depicted on the smuggler-haunted Galloway coast at a date roughly one generation later than the events of 1745, which made the background for *Waverley*. For this reason, simply as a story, *Guy Mannering* is perhaps the best of them all. No doubt there are clumsinesses in the construction; but what fertility of picturesque invention and what force! It is never easy, in a tale of incident, to maintain a mounting climax—still less when it starts with a scene so stormy as that of the running fight between Dirk Hatteraick's lugger and the revenue sloop of war, with the murder of the excise officer, and the disappearance of Meg Bertram's son. Yet without an effort Scott, passing over seventeen years, brings us back into the key of his tale with young Bertram's adventure in the Waste of Cumberland when he came to Dandie Dinmont's rescue; and from there forward we go on to scenes of increasing excitement, which crowd thick and fast, one necessarily leading to the other. There is the attack by the smugglers on Colonel Mannering's house; there is the prolonged adventure of the jail at Portpatrick ferry, Dandie Dinmont's arrival there, and the escape of him and Bertram from the burning building in the riot—a wonderful piece of narrative; yet it falls back into its place as a mere step to the climax when, guided by Meg Merrilies, Bertram and Dandie go to seize Dirk Hatteraick in his cave. In a sense that is the true climax, for Meg Merrilies is slain as she achieves her long-watched purpose; and the old gipsy is the central figure of the story, the main mover, she dominates the whole. Yet in point of mere force even this astonishing scene pales in memory beside that which follows when the ruffian and the rogue, who have wrought together and been defeated together, meet in Hatteraick's cell, and the chained savage breaks the other's neck before he does justice on himself and cheats the leg-hangman.—The best proof of Scott's art is that of the supreme violence he narrates nothing; he brings the pieces together, he lets Hatteraick growl, and spring; the next stage is told when bribed warders come to bring Gloss

back to his own cell, and they find Hatteraick "quietly stretched on his pallet within a yard of his victim." The fierce ruffian's own end is narrated as simply as if it were a piece of police court news, after he had been found in the noose where he contrived to hang himself.

To make the bloody work something other than a mere mess of thrills and horrors—to humanise all this brutality—was again no easy matter; yet Scott has done it triumphantly—guided no doubt by an artist's sense of balance, creating instinctively what was needed. He did not make Dandie Dinmont for the purpose we may be sure; but Dandie Dinmont is the main force that sends wholesome air through the ferment. He goes through the tale like the biggest and of good-natured dog; never vindictive, but always ready for an encounter; generous strength, simple and kindly, plunging in without bidding wherever help is needed, wise like a wise dog, with a limit to his intelligence but none to his fidelity. There is much talk about novels of analysis, but I do not recall the personage in fiction—or in real life—whom I know better than this Border farmer. He has not a great deal to say, but every word that he says tells something of the man. If there are any scenes in the book which lag, and in which we seem to breathe the atmosphere of makebelieve, Dandie has only to appear and the whole is as real as if we saw it happening. And when he appears it is impossible to think that the world is a den of thieves, and robbers, the scene of a "crook-play."

Very different from Dandie is the greater figure of Meg, who never enters without lifting the theme to a romantic level. She is a creation of another kind: if he is normal healthy manhood, all the more reassuring because it carries a warrant that it is nothing rare, she belongs to a region that barely borders on sanity, and yet holds to it by what is noble. Half-mad she may be, vindictive, with impulses as vagrant as her feet; but constant to the death in certain affections and certain loyalties; and her language keeps the beauty of wild earth. Again and again her speech is far truer poetry than could be found in *Marmion*.



Meg belongs to tragedy; but she has in a sense her comic anti-type in the other figure who belongs to the realm where invention must be supremely skilful if its work is not to be discredited. Dominie Sampson is sketched like a Gilroy caricature; but in a book, for the most part inspired by close study of types that were normal in their environment, he holds his place, through the same normal attributes of affection and devotion as link Meg to ordinary folk—specially to the hero and the heroine. Naturally enough, the scene where the Dominie appears most natural and least unlike ordinary flesh and blood is that in which Scott puts him *tête-à-tête* with the gipsy witch: it is the only scene where humour dominates while Meg is present.

Along with these outstanding creations, Meg, Dandie, the Dominie and Dirk Hatteraick, there is a crowd of living characters. Glossin, the thievish solicitor, is rendered with a touch of professional admiration for his competence. Mr. Bertram, the elder, prey of this spider, is, in his way almost as masterly done as Dandie; he carries his own atmosphere, he is the fully individualised example of a type, the old-fashioned, unthrifty landlord, proud of his descent, yet without the pride that should keep him fit to justify it. His neighbour, Sir Arthur Hazelwood, is not so individualised: he is a mere character-part, a figure set up to display certain humours. The lawyers again, Mr. Pleydell and Mr. McMurdo, are slightly sketched; the scene of high jinks among lights of the bar upon which Colonel Mannering finds himself an intruder belongs rather to anecdote than to invention. As for the hero and the two young ladies, his sister and his ladylove, Scott has made no effort at all to study the young man; whether as Vanbeest Brown or as Harry Bertram, he is simply a well-grown young man who may be trusted to act with courage, and who moves under conditions dictated by the persons on whom our interest centres. More pains have been taken with the young ladies; but young ladies always and persistently refused to live at Scott's bidding; and at points the story is conducted through their correspondence, a device in which this author never succeeds.

There remains Colonel Mannering to be considered, and he deserves it, for in his case, again, the novelist is plainly drawing his own portrait. We see him first—and we do not see much of him—in the opening chapter, where he arrives at Ellangowan House, a stranger who has lost his way—for here, as in *Waverley*, Scott starts off, with the idea of making Scotland more intelligible by showing it through English eyes.

But when twenty-two years from that opening have passed, and the stranger appears again as a man in experienced middle-age, the focus of the story has shifted. The very title of the book *Guy Mannering*, implies that Scott's original plan was that the young amateur of astrology who foretold a fortune in the first chapter should be the prime agent in working out the destiny that he forecast. But, as constantly happened, Scott's characters took charge of the story, and when his friend Terry dramatised the work for the London stage, he at once called the play *Meg Merrilies*. For in truth the Colonel is a very secondary figure, in whom Scott takes little interest—but whom he plainly continues to identify with himself. Walter Scott was the one young man in all Scotland who might conceivably have cast a horoscope when he had just left the university. The result is that we get a curious picture, for whose fidelity Hogg answers: the Ettrick Shepherd said that he was always certain of the author of *Waverley*, for Colonel Mannering was Scott to the life. Mannering is no doubt Scott in a rôle which Scott never played; he is the returned successful soldier and administrator that, but for his lame leg, Scott might so probably have been. Yet it should be realised that all the imperiousness and the sharp assertion of parental authority which Scott depicts were—according to Hogg—Scott's own characteristics; what is more, the portrait accords perfectly with the tone of Scott's own letters to his son when his son was a subaltern.

There is, it is true, not much trace in Lockhart's picture of any somewhat choleric colonel. But, as Lang says in his *Life of Lockhart*, Scott evidently fell in love with his son-in-law; and Lockhart's feeling for Scott was only just

on this side of idolatry. It is to Hogg that we must go to hear how the Shirra used to draw down shaggy eyebrows. Here is one descriptive passage—which as usual tells as much of Hogg as of his subject.

“I must confess that, before people of high rank, he did not much encourage my speeches and stories. He did not then hang down his brows, as when he was ill-pleased with me, but he raised them up and glowered, and put his upper lip far over the under one, seeming to be always terrified at what was to come out next, and then he generally cut me short, by some droll anecdote, to the same purport of what I was saying. In this he did not give me fair justice, for, in my own broad homely way, I am a very good speaker, and teller of a story too.”

Here now is an episode which I think suggests the likeness to Colonel Mannering, of which Hogg was so conscious. At this time the Shepherd was editing a journal of literary and social comment called *The Spy*. A review of modern literature had appeared in Ballantyne’s *Edinburgh Annual Register*, in which the poets were enumerated in an order that did not please Hogg. Scott was avowedly concerned in the *Register*, and *The Spy* published a comment which was plainly meant to convey that Scott was surreptitiously blowing his own trumpet—at the expense of “one who is perhaps his superior.”

Hogg came, as was his frequent custom, to breakfast at Scott’s house, and found his host “in very bad humour indeed.”

“He was sitting at his desk in his study at Castle Street, and when I went in he looked up to me with a visage as stern as that of a judge going to pronounce sentence on a malefactor, and at the same time, he neither rose nor saluted me, which was always his wont, and the first words that he addressed to me were these, ‘Mr. Hogg, I am very angry with you, I tell you it plainly, and I think I have a right to be so. I demand, sir, an explanation of a sentence in your *Spy* of yesterday.’

“Knowing perfectly well to what sentence he alluded, my peasant blood began to boil, and I found it rushing to my head and face most violently, as I judged myself by far the most aggrieved. ‘Then I must demand an explanation from you, Mr. Scott,’ said I, ‘Were you the author of the article alluded

to in my paper, which places you at the head, and me at the tail, nay, as the very dregs of all the poets of Britain?'

"What right had you, sir, to suppose that I was the author of it?' said he in perfect rage.

"Nay, what right had *you* to suppose that *you* were the author of it, that you are taking it so keenly to yourself?' said I. 'The truth is, that when I wrote the remarks, I neither knew nor cared who was the author of the article alluded to; but before the paper went to press, I believed it to have been Mr. Southey, for Johnnie Ballantyne told me so, and swore to it; but if the feather suits your cap, you are perfectly welcome to it.'

"Very well, Hogg,' said he, 'that is spoken like a man, and like yourself; I am satisfied. I thought it was meant as personal to me in particular. But never mind. We are friends again as usual. Sit down and we will go to our breakfast together immediately, and it shall never more be mentioned between us.'"

Some rather muddle-headed observations follow in which Hogg continues to suggest that Scott had after all written the article, which is incredible: no poet that ever lived was so far from claiming the foremost place for his own works. But it is important to remember that the Shepherd regarded Scott's disposition very much as, in *Guy Mannering*, the Colonel's ex-subaltern and the Colonel's daughter ~~regarded~~ that of the Colonel—a somewhat explosive mixture.

In a sense this extract from Hogg is a caricature of Scott; and assuredly when Scott drew himself in *Guy Mannering*, he did not intend to make a flattering portrait. So, since Hogg has been quoted in a manner that may make some think less of Scott and others think less of Hogg, let us add two other sentences from Hogg's sketch which do honour to both.

"He was the only one I ever knew whom no man, either poor or rich, held at ill-will. I was the only exception myself, that ever came to my knowledge, but that was only for a short season, and all the while it never lessened his interest in my welfare."

"For me, I think in *The Lady of the Lake* he reached his acme in poetry; for, in fact, the whole, both of his poetry and prose, have always appeared to me as two splendid arches, of

which *The Lady of the Lake* is the keystone of one, and *Guy Mannering* and *Old Mortality* the joint keystones of the other."

The estimate is worth remembering: for Hogg at his best in verse reached Scott's highest level. The writer of this book also finds himself in agreement with Hogg's choices. Except in *Old Mortality*, there is not the exuberance of creative power which we meet in *Guy Mannering*; but not even in *Old Mortality* does one feel the same zest of creation as in the earlier book. Scott has put into it all his outdoor pleasures. There is the chapter about blackfishing, or salmon-spearing; there is the chapter of the mountain fox-hunt—neither of them strictly essential to the narrative, though both are skilfully linked into it. There is Dandie Dinmont's pony, quite definitely one of the characters of the book,—and of late a charming detail has emerged about this personage, in the course of a discussion as to how far Scott seriously attempted to conceal his authorship. His nearest neighbour, while he lived at Ashestiel, was Mr. Pringle, of Whytebank; it will be remembered that the sons of this "long descended lord of Yair" figured in one of the introductory epistles to *Marmion*. Abbotsford was not quite so near Whytebank as Ashestiel, but the intimacy lasted, and when the Pringle household found that Dandie's pony was called Dumble, and that all the characteristics of the Dumble whom they cherished in their own stableyard were affectionately described, it would have been hard to persuade them that their friend, the author of *Marmion*, was not also the "Author of *Waverley*"—or, for that matter, that he desired to keep his secret carefully from this neighbouring and most friendly household. For that matter again, it is hard not to believe that Scott foresaw and intended the pleasure which this naming of Dandie's pony would give.

Then there are the dogs. Since Homer wrote about Argus, no man has written so well of dogs as Sir Walter; and indeed in a chapter of *Old Mortality* he echoes and can afford to echo that famous passage of the *Odyssey*. It would take too long to suggest the outlines of an anthology of dog-

worship, to be gathered from his books. The poems yield less; the blood-hounds in the *Lay*, and FitzJames's couple "of black St. Hubert's breed" are seen with the eye of a connoisseur, but do not become characters. Once the novels begin, dogs are everywhere; in *Waverley* when we reach the happy ending and the Baron is set free from hiding, Scott makes a point of assuring us that Bran and Buscar got the full meal that they had long wanted. But *Guy Mannerling* is the *locus classicus* in Scott for dog-fanciers. It has named a breed; and thenceforward Scott's household was never without a brace or two of terriers with the consecrated names of Pepper and Mustard preserved among them.—But the detail of this should be recalled.

In the book's second part we make acquaintance with young Harry Bertram—then known to himself and others only as Vanbeest Brown—on his way to walk through Cumberland into Scotland. (Incidentally, it should be noted that he carried not only a "small bundle with a change slung across his shoulders," and an oaken cudgel in his hand, but a volume of Shakespeare in each pocket; and we may conclude that we know how Walter Scott in his young days went equipped for a tramp.) But there was also "a rough terrier dog, his constant companion," answering to the name of Wasp. At the first halt, an alehouse near the Roman Wall, the traveller found himself in company with a Scotch farmer—concerned like himself, to gratify a lusty appetite. But when Vanbeest Brown had put from him the desire of meat and drink sufficiently to attend to Wasp's needs, the farmer also was free to take notice; and Wasp enters into the action as opening the way to a momentous alliance. Here are the first words of Dandy Dinmont:

"A bonny terrier that, sir—and a fell cheild at the vermin, I warrant him—that is, if he's been weel entered, for it a' lies in that."

"Really, sir," said Brown, "his education has been somewhat neglected, and his chief property is being a pleasant companion."

"Aye, sir? that's a pity, begging your pardon—it's a great pity that—beast or body, education should aye be minded. I

have six terriers at hame, forbye twa couple of slow-hunds, five grews, and a wheen other dogs. There's auld Pepper and auld Mustard, and young Pepper and young Mustard, and little Pepper and little Mustard . . . !'"

Mr. Dinmont proceeds to detail the manner of their education, but it must be spared in consideration to the less fortunate for whom Scotch dialect makes a difficulty. I need not recall how Dandie's conversation with his landlady rouses the attention of an old woman who sits in the corner, nor how Meg Merrilies receives the news that Bertram, the old Laird, is dead, and Ellangowan sold to the attorney Glossin; nor how Dandie, going ahead on Duple, but pausing at a friend's house for "twa or three cheerers," is waylaid and so beset that Brown coming up on foot is just in time to rescue him—with good assistance from Wasp. Here are the first words that came from the blood-bespattered farmer when he recognised his deliverer:

"'Deil, but your dog's weel entered wi' the vermin now, sir'!"

"When the cōuple, mounted together on Duple, ("Duple could carry six folk if his back was long enough," says Dandie), escape from their reinforced assailants, and reach Charlie's-hope, we hear a deal about the Peppers and Mustards.

These dogs come into general canine history as well as into Scott's biography; for in this case Scott's novel fixed an identification—wrongly, according to himself, since "the character of Dandie Dinmont," he says in his note added in the edition of 1830, "was drawn from no individual. A dozen at least of stout Liddesdale yeomen, with whom he has been acquainted, and whose hospitality he has shared in his rambles through that wild country . . . might lay claim to be the prototype of the rough but faithful, hospitable, and generous farmer." But there was one James Davidson of Hindlee, who "besides the points of blunt honesty, personal strength and hardihood . . .

had the humour of naming a celebrated race of terriers which he possessed by the generic names of Mustard and Pepper (according as their colour was yellow, or greyish black)." Naturally, this worthy found the cap put on him, and Dandie Dinmont became his by-name in the country.

Scott only met him after the book had appeared. "He is much flattered with the compliment, and goes uniformly by the name among his comrades," he wrote to Morritt, "but has never read the book. Ailie used to read it to him but it sent him to sleep."—This Dandie accepted the compliment with reserve, saying "that the Shirra had not written about him more than about other folk, but only about his dogs."

None the less when an English lady wanted to acquire a brace of the Mustard and Pepper terriers, and addressed her demand to Dandie Dinmont, the letter was duly delivered to Mr. Davidson, who was proud of the distinction, and of course sent on the dogs.

In one at least of the many portraits of Scott he is represented with a couple of these attendants. They are rough little creatures, much like an old-fashioned Irish terrier, or still more like the Border terrier of to-day, but long backed and short legged, fit for going into holes after fox or badger. The like may be seen running about in the streets of Jedburgh; but they would stand no chance in an English dog-show, for this breed, like the Irish, has been for show purposes refined out of recognition.

The essential point was the build; and there is a passage in one of Scott's letters which describes a Sunday walk, when a hare was started by accident; and away went not only the deer-hounds but these little, long-backed, short-legged creatures, doing their best to keep up—and so stubborn that they would, as Scott observes, run down the hare at last if they were given the day to do it in.

In the days when Edinburgh was Scott's regular dwelling-place with Lasswade for a week-end cottage, Camp, the bull-terrier, was, as has been seen, the dominant dog. After his decease, deerhounds and terriers were the dogs of Scott's



companionship ; though no doubt at Ashestiel and at Abbotsford, the kennels held pointers, like Juno, who figures so largely in *The Antiquary*—and who is seen rather through the hostile eyes of Mr. Oldbuck than through those of her master. But neither terrier nor deerhound is ever named in the Waverleys without affection.

The little dogs never attained to the closest intimacy. That was reserved for the stately breed of whom the most famous was Maida, whose coming is thus chronicled in April 1816 :

“I have got from my friend, Glengarry, the noblest dog ever seen on the Border since Johnnie Armstrong’s time. He is between the wolf and deer greyhound, about six feet long from the tip of the nose to the tail, and high and strong in proportion ; he is quite gentle, and a great favourite : tell Will Erskine he will eat off his plate without being at the trouble to put a paw on the table or chair.”

In after years Maida was so often obliged to pose in pictures that he began to growl and show teeth at sight of an easel. He died of old age in 1824 ; and his effigy, rough-hewn by a local stonemason, was set for a “leaping-on stone” at the ~~gates of Abbotsford~~ gates of Abbotsford, with a Latin inscription, containing one false quantity (*januam*) of which Lockhart was guilty, and another due to Ballantyne’s mistake—for Lockhart had written *dormis* and Ballantyne substituted *jaces*. Here is the couplet :

“Maidae marmorea jaces sub imagine Maida,  
Ad januam domini sit tibi terra levis.”

But the stone had also Scott’s own English :

“Beneath the sculptured form which late you wore,  
Sleep soundly, Maida, at your master’s door.”

And in truth Maida and his master are inseparable ; they still move, majestic figures—with a tail of Mustard and Peppers yapping, snapping, leaping and searching about in the background. About Maida, when old age sat

so heavily on him that he could not follow his master far from the house, Scott wrote to Maria Edgeworth :

"I have sometimes thought of the final cause of dogs having such short lives, and I am quite satisfied it is in compassion to the human race ; for if we suffer so much in losing a dog after an acquaintance of ten or twelve years, what would it be if they were to live double that time? "

## CHAPTER XIV

### SCOTT IN LONDON AND IN PARIS

1815

IN March 1815, when the Courts rose, Scott visited London again, after six years. His fame had now reached its height, and there was no moroseness in him that should prompt him to undervalue its expression—as there was no vanity to make him over-greedy for such rare delicacies. Joanna Baillie had written that he must expect “to be stared at only a little less than the Czar of Muscovy or old Blücher.” But London offered much besides the ~~staring of even~~ intelligent curiosity. He met Byron and saw much of him; unlike as they were, these two, each of whom at that moment had created for himself an enthusiasm to which English literary history has no parallel, came together in friendship untouched by any feeling of rivalry. “We found a great deal to say to each other” is Scott’s very simple way of putting it. “Our sentiments agreed a good deal except upon the subjects of religion and politics, upon neither of which I was inclined to believe that Lord Byron entertained very fixed opinions.” As to religion, Scott told Byron that if he lived, he would probably become a Catholic and distinguish himself by the eccentricity of his devotions. In politics, though Byron “talked a good deal in the strain of what is now (about 1825) called Liberalism, at heart,” Scott says “I would have termed Byron a patrician on principle.”

But in the main they laughed together. Scott’s last impression of Byron was from the summer of this year

when they lunched together, Mathews, the comedian, being of the company, and Byron was "as playful as a kitten. I never saw him in such gaiety and good humour."

Another notable meeting was with the Prince Regent, who insisted on "getting up a snug little dinner for him—the more Scotch the better." Croker, whose connection with the *Quarterly* brought him into close touch with Scott, was the intermediary for this arrangement, and by his account the Prince and Scott—"the two most brilliant storytellers in their several ways that I have ever met—both exerted themselves that evening with delightful effect."

Lockhart had an account of the dinner from Mr. Adam, Lord Chief Commissioner of the Jury in Scotland, and it ends with this episode:

"Towards midnight, the Prince called for 'a bumper, with all the honours, to the Author of *Waverley*,' and looked significantly, as he was charging his own glass, to Scott. Scott seemed somewhat puzzled for a moment, but instantly recovering himself, and filling his glass to the brim, said, 'Your Royal Highness looks as if you thought I had some claim to the honours of this toast. I have no such pretensions, but shall take good care that the real Simon Pure hears of the high compliment that has now been paid him.' He then drank off his claret, and joined in the cheering, which the Prince himself timed. But before the company could resume their seats, his Royal Highness exclaimed—'Another of the same, if you please, to the Author of *Marmion*—and now, Walter, my man, I have checkmated you for *ance*.' The second bumper was followed by cheers still more prolonged; and Scott then rose and returned thanks in a short address, which struck the Lord Chief Commissioner as 'alike grave and graceful.' This story has been circulated in a very perverted shape. I now give it on the authority of my venerated friend. He adds, that having occasion, the day after, to call on the Duke of York, his Royal Highness said to him—'Upon my word, Adam, my brother went rather too near the wind about *Waverley*—but nobody could have turned the thing more prettily than Walter Scott did—and upon the whole I never had better fun!'"

While these festivities were going on, Europe was once again in terror of one man. Napoleon had escaped from Elba: the menace, small at first, grew with a speed that

is now hardly conceivable till it came to a head on the field of Waterloo. On July 2nd, a famous Edinburgh surgeon, Sir Charles Bell, who had hurried to assist the overburdened medical staff after the battle, wrote a descriptive letter from Brussels which was shown to Scott. "When I read it, it set me on fire," said Scott, and by July 27th, he was on the road for Flanders. Three young men, one of them a kinsman, Scott of Gala, another one of his Pringle neighbours, had the amazing luck to accompany him.

It was settled through John Ballantyne, who acted as what we should now call the author's literary agent, that Scott should describe his impressions of the Continent; and accordingly his daily letters to Mrs. Scott took the form of epistles addressed to an imaginary group—consisting of a Presbyterian minister, a veteran officer on half pay, a spinster lady, sister to the writer, and a laird with a taste for economics. The actual letters after being read at Abbotsford went the round to the laird, Lord Somerville, across the water, and the minister, Dr. Douglas, at Gala-shiels; then to Edinburgh to Scott's aunt, Miss Christian Rutherford—who was in age almost his sister—and to his brother ~~Major~~ John Scott. Finally Erskine and James Ballantyne knocked them into shape for the press.

So we can follow Scott on his journey through Flanders where he was struck by the "appearance of antiquity" in the towns and took much pleasure in the enduring marks of "ancient wealth and burgherlike opulence," as well as in the formal gardens with their statues and pieces of artificial water—"no unnatural decorations for the immediate vicinity of a dwelling-place, and infinitely superior to the meagreness of bare turf and gravel."

Then follows a detailed account of the period, in which the newly restored Bourbons found difficulties meet them at every turn. It is criticism of a royalist administration written by a staunch royalist; temperate but broad in its philosophy; and after reading it, Napoleon's sudden leap back to power becomes a thing, tremendous indeed, like the bursting of a reservoir, but natural and simply explicable. Victor Hugo, set to elucidate the same series of

facts, would have concentrated limelight on the single figure, and given a story grandiose, superhuman, impressive and essentially unbelievable.

After this comes the description of Waterloo, written by Scott after he had walked over the field still scarred with the gun-carriage wheels, and reeking with the stench from all those too thickly buried dead. But here again, there is no mere picturesque writing: a careful historian has laboured to reconstitute the whole movement of the struggle, and the result makes chapters of no common interest. Yet no doubt it was too early for a definitive record of so great an action. The real value of "Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk" lies in the picture of France in the first days of the second occupation by allied forces. Scott and his companions journeyed from Waterloo to Paris at a time when certain towns—for instance, Valenciennes on this very route—had not yet surrendered; when the road was thronged with disbanded French soldiery, and when the Prussians were taking their revenge.

We may call it journalism—and the writing has no pretension to be distinguished literature; but very little professional journalism is so simple, so direct, so observant, and so skilful in the choice of detail to convey an impression of the whole.

The book has no importance in the chronicle of Scott's writings, but it remains entirely readable and full of information about an amazing period. For a biographer, however, it is of interest to note that Scott, whose patriotism was passionate and combative, sees the French without rancour, and does not conceal his distaste for the brutality with which Prussians took their vengeance. He makes allowance for the heavy cause Prussians had to feel vindictive; yet with evident pleasure of contrast, he chronicles the decency and good-nature shown by British troops. In the later chapters which describe the state of Paris under occupation and the first beginnings of the restored monarchy, we find the same balancing mind, austere at times in its judgments, but never deficient in sympathy. Scott can easily enter into the temper of those French royalists who

did not deny that the imperialists were getting their deserts, but made wry faces when they passed a foreign officer. "The man that is hanged has no more than his deserts," one of them said to Scott, "but I don't like to look at the hangman."

In short, "Paul's Letters" were written by such a man as the author of *Old Mortality* has portrayed in Harry Morton: a nature capable of enthusiasm, but one in which enthusiasm never silences judgment, and whose power to enter into the feelings of opponents quickly sets in action the instinct for fair-play. "Paul's Letters" show us in a crucial instance, when Scott's passions were all and deeply engaged, how rare were his qualifications for the task of an imaginative historian: above all, for the historian who should teach his own country to understand those strifes by which it had been torn in living memory, and who should form the elements of a sane nationalism.

It is worth noting that so early as 1815 Scott foresaw that reaction against the Bourbons which brought in—as he foretold—the house of Orleans at the head of a Constitutional Monarchy.

His reception in Paris was dazzling. The Duke of Wellington welcomed him with the kindness and hospitable courtesy which he bestowed where he gave liking; and no other honour could have affected Walter Scott so profoundly. Foreign potentates were not less forthcoming: even Blücher showed him much attention; but especially Platoff, Hetman of the Cossacks, insisted on providing Scott with a Ukraine charger that he might attend mounted at the review of Russian troops. One of the privileged young men, Mr. Pringle, tells us how he and Scott were walking down the Rue de la Paix when Platoff, cantering past at the head of Cossacks, recognised the poet, jumped off his horse and, running over, kissed Scott on both cheeks with great demonstrations of good will.

The effect of all this, which would have set many a sober head spinning, was to increase this man's real modesty. He had been in contact with the doers of great deeds, and

he thought less than ever of the fame which is won by agreeable writing. But as soon as he was back, he turned his pen to a double use—celebrating in his poem *The Field of Waterloo* the actions of those who had received him in friendship, and devoting the money earned by the first edition to relief of the widows and children of the men who fell.

The poem, once the immediate vogue was passed, found little favour; Lockhart himself, whose love for Scott blunted all the edge of his critical faculty, speaks of it in tones of apology; and it would be foolish to gainsay a verdict so long established. Yet for a student of Scott it is of extraordinary interest to read, first the prose account of the battle, where a narrator of the first excellence has laboriously striven to set down a coherent view of those surging movements, and to picture the close personal direction of two supreme leaders; and then the recital in verse which renders rather the emotions of a poet as he surveyed the ground and sought to reconstitute the scene. So reading them, it will be felt, I think, that in verse Scott has actually etched the setting with more power to convey it than in his slower-moving prose; and that the expression of what was felt by such a man on such an occasion has at least a lasting personal interest.

I note specially the passionate intensity with which this man, nurtured in the tradition of dramatic chivalry, regrets that the beaten leader did not choose to fall rather than to fly. We may dissent intellectually from the scorn expressed for Napoleon's decision; we may even hold that those years at St. Helena set a seal on what was imperishable in Napoleon's work deeper and stronger than could have been left by any martial gesture; but we have to recognise that the scorn expressed in the poem has in it nothing of vulgar railing, but springs from a disappointment that is not ignoble; an unsatisfied craving to see greatness display itself even in its fall. It may be that this instinct in Scott argues a preference for the obviously dramatic; but one thing is clear. All the tradition of leadership among fighting



men that was in his blood and bones coerced him: the Border rider could think no other thought.

His praise of Wellington is admirably brief; in truth it is summed in the first couplet:

"Thou, too, whose deeds of fame renew'd  
Bankrupt a nation's gratitude."

What more was left to say? and indeed, what less was due? This is no more the language of hyperbole than the threnody which follows over the dead. It is not great poetry, but when was great poetry written on such a theme? The turmoil of thoughts is too confused, the ferment of many conflicting emotions too turbulent for a clear wine of song to issue. Yet the poem tells us at least much of the mind of Walter Scott; and at the end we find this clear-judging man drawing his sane conclusion that the one and only quality on which his countrymen could rest their pride was neither valour nor discipline.

"Such may by fame be lured, by gold be hired;  
'Tis constancy in the good cause alone,  
Best justifies the meed thy valiant sons have won."

Enough has been told to show how Scott was received among the crowned heads and captains of Europe; but Lockhart tells a story of his going back by London to Abbotsford which is perhaps more eloquent of fame. He travelled with a kinsman and, making for Rokeby, they passed through Sheffield. Here Scott sought out for himself a planter's knife with all possible contrivances attached, and, writing his name, "Walter Scott, Abbot'sford," on a card, desired to have it engraved on the handle. The younger man, hearing of this, wanted a like weapon, was directed to the shop, and wrote down his name also for the engraver. When the master cutler read "John Scott, of Gala," he scanned it, and then said he "hoped it might be as useful to him as the other Mr. Scott's ticket."

"One of my best men, an honest fellow from the North, went out of his senses when he saw it—he offered me a week's

work if I would let him keep it to himself—and I took Saunders at his word.”

Canny Yorkshire, and extravagant Scot.

Scott came back to Abbotsford, loaded with presents for his family—which included the workmen on his place. One old fellow for the rest of his life on Sundays took snuff out of the “bonnie French mull” that had been brought him; a horn mull was good enough for weekdays.—There was, no doubt, a great welcome to the traveller; but it had one exception. In those days Scott’s charger was a white thoroughbred “with a mane such as Rubens loved to paint,” and had always stood like a rock to be mounted. But on the day after Scott’s return, Daisy was led out to the leaping-on stone, and when Scott put his foot in the stirrup, to the surprise of all the horse reared bolt upright and threw him to the ground. Two or three times again trial was made, and the same happened. Then Scott, thinking Daisy had taken some dislike to his dress, sent for Tom Purdie, dressed as always in old white beaver hat and green shooting jacket which Scott had discarded, but exactly similar to those which he was now wearing. Tom mounted and the horse was perfectly quiet. A week later, trial was made again; the same happened. Scott was disposed to listen to the suggestion that Daisy had a grudge at him for being left behind on his long journey. But at all events, he took it for a sign; parted with Daisy, and, “wars and rumours of wars being over,” he resolved thenceforth to “have done with such dainty blood and stick to a good sober cob.”

He was not yet forty-five, but the turn of life had come for him. His physical strength had been and still was abnormal. Hogg tells that once at some gathering of young men, “at a certain time of the night a number of the young heroes differed prodigiously with regard to their various degrees of muscular strength,” and the outcome was a measuring of chests and biceps, with Hogg as umpire. “Scott, who never threw cold water on any fun, submitted

to be measured with the rest," and had the greatest girth of any round the chest—Hogg himself coming next "and very little short."

"But when I came to examine the arms, Sir Walter's had double the muscular power of mine, and very nearly so of every man's who was there. I declare, that from the elbow to the shoulder, they felt as if he had the strength of an ox."

Yet this exceptional development of the arm and shoulder originated in the time when his lower limbs were crippled, and remained as a compensation for the fate that he must limp through life. He walked with the hardest, but in doing so he put a strain on himself beyond what his companions must endure. Only on horseback he was quite on level terms—and perhaps not even on horseback, since to mount and dismount cost him effort.

Fighting thus unsubmissively against a physical defect, or rather treating it as non-existent, he had also taxed his powers of mental work entirely out of common measure. Both for speed of output and for long continuing of effort he had been incredible; he had done in ten years the work of twenty; and he began to feel that the years counted. Age has begun when the interests of a man's children seem to him more important than his own, and in the late autumn of 1815 Scott wrote and with manifest sincerity from Abbotsford to Joanna Baillie:

"My eldest son is already a bold horseman and a fine shot, though only about fourteen years old. I assure you I was prouder of the first blackcock he killed than I have been of anything whatever since I first killed one myself, and that is twenty years ago."

But upon one thing his mind was set with increasing persistence; the adding of field to field—or rather of woodland to woodland. He wrote in that same letter:

"You must know, I have purchased a large lump of wild land, lying adjoining to this little property, which greatly more than doubles my domains. The land is said to be reasonably

bought, and I am almost certain I can turn it to advantage by a little judicious expenditure; for this place is already allowed to be worth twice what it cost me; and our people here think so little of planting, and do it so carelessly, that they stare with astonishment at the alteration which well planted woods make on the face of a country. There is, besides, a very great temptation, from the land running to within a quarter of a mile of a very sweet wild sheet of water, of which (that is, one side of it) I have every chance to become proprietor: this is a poetical circumstance not to be lost sight of, and accordingly I keep it full in my view."

By 1816 Lockhart says that the original 150 acres had grown to 1,000: the estate finally reached 1,300; and he does not share Scott's opinion that the purchases were made cheaply. All the small neighbouring holders were quick to realise that Scott would be as much tempted by amenity or historic association as another buyer would be by the yield in grass or corn; and plenty were ready to tempt this willing buyer.

And in truth he did not stick much at a price when money could be made with such surprising ease by a labour in which he delighted; nor, if he had not been involved in business ventures would there have been any reason why a man earning as he did should have denied himself this hobby, not only harmless but beneficent. For where he bought, he beautified; and where he was master, new hearths were kindled.

## CHAPTER XV

### YEARS OF CREATION AND SCOTT'S BARONETCY

1816-19

THE three years after Waterloo were perhaps the most fruitful even of Scott's prolific career, and they closed with a public recognition of his merit such as had never before been bestowed on a writer. Apart from this, they were years in which nothing notable happened to him. Since this book is in the first instance a story of Scott's life, it seems better simply to glance at the works produced, deferring consideration of them to another chapter, and then to trace out again the tenor of his existence.

He finished "Paul's Letters" in the last days of 1815, and with a great "ouf" flung himself into *The Antiquary*. "I have only a very general sketch at present," he wrote to Morritt on December 22nd, "but when once I get my pen to the paper, it will walk fast enough." And on December 29th, this verse went to James Ballantyne :

"Dear James—I'm done, thank God, with the long yarns  
Of the most prosy of Apostles, Paul;  
And now advance, sweet Heathen of Monkbarns!  
Step out, old quiz, as fast as I can scrawl."

By May everybody was reading this successor to *Guy Mannering*. Before it was out, John Ballantyne contracted for two more novels to appear together in four volumes under a general title, as *Tales of My Landlord*. It was part of his contract that the works should have no signature

whatever; and instead of Constable, Murray and Blackwood became the publishers. Of course these publishers knew perfectly well that they were buying work by the Author of *Waverley*; and when *The Black Dwarf* and *Old Mortality* appeared, in December 1816, nobody doubted of their parentage.

Incidentally also Scott in this period finished his long poems *The Field of Waterloo* and *Harold the Dauntless*; and he wrote for the *Edinburgh Register* a long History of the year 1814, which was followed a twelve-month later by a History of 1815.

In May 1816, John Ballantyne covenanted with Constable for the publication of *Rob Roy*, which was somewhat held back by work on the *History*: for whatever Scott's brain might do, his pen could only plough one furrow at a time. But *Rob* was done in time to appear on December 31st, 1817. In June 1818, *The Heart of Midlothian* followed.

This brings the count to six romances, of which *The Black Dwarf* is shorter and relatively a failure. Any one of the other five takes rank with *Waverley* and with *Guy Mannering*. With the possible exception of *Redgauntlet*, none of the later novels can be put in the same category with these first genial creations; though in different ways *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward* greatly extended their author's fame.

It remains to be seen what the author of all these *Waverleys*—and of so much else—was doing in this time.

The answer is chiefly, that he was buying land, planting trees, and building and decorating. Architects began to appear, to assist "in arranging an addition to the cottage at Abbotsford, intended to connect the present farmhouse with the line of low buildings to the right of it." Little was left of the "present farmhouse," when these arrangements had developed. And as for the furnishing, this cross between border-rider and antiquarian leapt on his hobby-horse, and away with him. (It must be remembered that he was earning—according to Lockhart—about £10,000 a year.) Here is the description sent to Terry:

"I expect to get some decorations from the old Tolbooth of Edinburgh, particularly the cope-stones of the door-way, or lintels, as we'd call them, and a *niche* or two—one very handsome indeed! Better get a niche *from* the Tolbooth than a niche *in* it, to which such building operations are apt to bring the projectors. This addition will give me: first, a handsome boudoir, in which I intend to place Mr. Bullock's Shakespeare, [the gift of a famous collector], with his superb cabinet, which serves as a pedestal. This opens into the little drawing-room, to which it serves as a chapel of ease; and on the other side, to a handsome dining-parlour of 27 feet by 18, with three windows to the north, and one to the south—the last to be Gothic, and filled with stained glass. Besides these commodities, there is a small conservatory or green house; and a study for myself, which we design to fit up with ornaments from Melrose Abbey. Bullock made several casts with his own hands—masks, and so forth, delightful for cornices, &c."

There was also an armoury, and Mrs. Terry, who was an artist, had offered to design windows of painted glass for it. But she had also been occupied in producing a son—to whom Scott stood godfather.

"Do not let Mrs. Terry think of the windows till little Wat is duly cared after. "About my armorial bearings: I will send you a correct drawing of them as soon as I can get hold of Blore, namely—of the scutcheons of my grandsires on each side, and my own. I could detail them in the jargon of heraldry, but it is better to speak to your eyes by translating them into coloured drawings, as the sublime science of armoury has fallen into some neglect of late years, with all its mascles, buckles, crescents, and boars of the first, second, third, and fourth."

Again on February 4th, 1818:

"I am now anxious to complete Abbotsford. . . . I am quite feverish about the armoury. I have two pretty complete suits of armour—one Indian one, and a cuirassier's, with boots, casque, &c.; many helmets, corslets, and steel caps, swords and poniards without end, and about a dozen of guns, ancient and modern. I have besides two or three battle-axes and maces, pikes and targets, a Highlander's accoutrement complete, a great variety of branches of horns, pikes, bows and arrows, and the clubs and creases of Indian tribes."

So much for house-planning. Then came land; in 1817 he acquired the adjoining property of Toftfield, on which was a substantial country house. The price was £10,000; but it made him master of the Huntly Burn, in whose glen Thomas the Rhymer held intercourse with the Queen of the Fairies. Owning now all the Rhymer's Glen, and "the whole ground of the battle of Melrose, from Skirmish-field to Turnagain," he had indeed rewards of his minstrelsy. They were heightened because his college friend, Captain Adam Fergusson, who had read *The Lady of the Lake* to his men under fire in the Peninsular War, was now retired on half-pay and asked no better than to become his tenant and neighbour at Huntly Burn—for so Toftfield began to be called; and accordingly, this purchase brought to Scott a gay and delightful companion.

It is impossible that any writer, above all one strange to Scott's country, should write of these matters without bearing in mind the heavy censure passed on Scott, by perhaps the greatest of his contemporary countrymen, Thomas Carlyle.

"Alas, Scott with all his wealth was infected; sick of the fearfullest malady, that of Ambition. . . . To cover the walls of a stone house in Selkirkshire with nicknacks, ancient armour and genealogical sheets, what can we name it but a being hit with delirium of a kind? That tract after tract of moorland in the shire of Selkirk should be joined together on parchment and by ring fence, and named after one's name—why, it is a shabby small-type edition of your vulgar Napoleons."

It is perfectly true, as Carlyle says, that "fast as the new gold came in for a new Waverley novel, or even faster, it changed itself into moory acres, into stone, and hewn or planted wood." But when Carlyle writes, "Why should he manufacture and not create, to make more money?" True Thomas is suggesting a falsehood. No competent critic will apply the word "manufacture" to the novels of these three years—in which undoubtedly the new gold was being spent as it came. They were written at high speed; but Scott could no other; and they are creations at least



as much (it is a comparison honourable to both) as Carlyle's story of *The Diamond Necklace*. ✓

Again, when Scott is charged with ambition, there are other things to be considered. Not once or twice Scott used his talent for earning money by writing with a specified purpose. He made his contribution in that way to the homeless Portuguese, and to the dependents of the slain at Waterloo. Neither *The Vision of Don Roderick* nor *The Field of Waterloo* is work entirely worthy of its author; but no man in either case has alleged that Scott wrote either poem without sincerity; and in the latter case, at all events, he wrote because his heart was hot within him. If the writing and the publishing of what was thus written be condemnable, it is from a purely artistic standpoint; and we may admit at once that Scott would not have cared a snap of the fingers for any such condemnation.

But the case of these Waverley Novels is different. He did in them the best work that was in him to do; he worked with the full joy of creation; and though he was not indifferent to the reward, it would be grossly unfair to say that he wrote them for the sake of the money they would bring in. Having got the money, he spent it, he over-spent it, counting on his power to make good arrears—not counting without a warrant, yet still spending and over-spending, lavishly—but how? Was it merely to gratify ambition by adding field to field, and enlarging his lordship of Abbotsford? It is well to consider the facts of the time.

The Napoleonic wars caused a period of profuse public spending and of widespread employment, at rates which then seemed high. After the wars came a period of stringency, which pinched all purses, and threw thousands out of work. The generation of to-day should not find this difficult to believe.

Scott writing to Southey on May 9th, 1817—it will be remembered that Southey was an active publicist—has this to say:

"I am glad to see you are turning your mind to the state of the poor. Should you enter into details on the subject of

the best mode of assisting them, I would be happy to tell you the few observations I have made—not on a very small scale neither, considering my fortune, for I have kept about thirty of the labourers in my neighbourhood in constant employment this winter. This I do not call charity, because they executed some extensive plantations and other works, which I could never have got done so cheaply, and which I always intended one day to do. But neither was it altogether selfish on my part, because I was putting myself to inconvenience in incurring the expense of several years at once, and certainly would not have done so, but to serve mine honest neighbours, who were likely to want work but for such exertion.”

He goes on to make observations on the scheme generally employed for relieving the poor, and condemns the practice of carrying out relief works at a rate of wages below that ordinarily current. The result had been, in his judgment, half-work for half-pay; in his own case he had avoided this by setting country people to do piecework by the contract. Such a bargain, he notes, must be carefully made for “if you do not keep them to their bargain, it is making a jest of the thing and forfeiting the very advantage you have in view—that, namely, of inducing the labourer to bring his heart and spirit to his work.”

Another letter sets out in more detail the ideas of this employer of labour. It was written to one who from this time out was part of his household—Hogg’s friend, William Laidlaw; for this farmer-poet had met with misfortune in his tenure of a farm in Midlothian, and it was arranged that Scott should pay him a small salary for supervising the Abbotsford estate.

“I told you I should like to convert the present steading at Beechland into a little hamlet of labourers, which we will name Abbotstown. The art of making people happy is to leave them much to their own guidance, but some little regulation is necessary. In the first place, I should like to have active and decent people there; then it is to be considered on what footing they should be. I conceive the best possible is, that they should pay for their cottages, and cow-grass, and potato ground, and be paid for their labour at the ordinary rate. I would give them some advantages sufficient to balance the following conditions, which, after all, are conditions in my favour:—1st: That

they shall keep their cottages and little gardens, and doors, tolerably neat; and 2nd: That the men shall on no account shoot, or the boys break timber or take birds' nests, or go among the planting. I do not know any other restrictions, and these are easy. I should think we might settle a few families very happily here, which is an object I have much at heart, for I have no notion of the proprietor who is only ambitious to be lord of the 'beast and the brute,' and chases the human face from his vicinity. By the by, could we not manage to have a piper among the colonists?"

He got his piper, of course, and started his colony. Writing to Joanna Baillie on New Year's Day, 1819, after dwelling on the virtues of the Duke of Buccleuch, who, in the bad times, with rents heavily in arrear, absented himself from London that he might not be obliged to cut down his payroll of labourers employed, he goes on:—

"In truth I have limited my other habits of expense very much since I fell into the habit of employing mine honest people. I wish you could have seen about a hundred children, being almost entirely supported by their fathers' or brothers' labour, come down yesterday to dance to the pipes, and get a piece of cake and bannock, and pence a-piece (no very deadly largess) in honour of *hogmanay*. I declare to you, my dear friend, that when I thought the poor fellows who kept these children so neat, and well taught, and well behaved, were slaving the whole day for eighteen-pence or twenty-pence at the most, I was ashamed of their gratitude and of their becks and bows."

Nine or ten shillings a week seems to us incredibly low; but a shilling a day was the normal wage of a farmhand in Ulster, even fifty years ago. In short, Scott finding himself in command of wealth that flowed in almost fabulously, spent it to his liking. He liked to be a landowner; that was the common ambition of all men in countries like Scotland and Ireland; he liked to own land for reasons of his own which he might have called hobby-horsical; but for serious reasons he liked to see land planted; and Washington Irving at this very time in 1817 described the hills about Abbotsford as "so destitute of trees that one could almost see a stout fly walking along their profile." There was scope for a missionary, and Tweedside to-day

bears witness to the fruits of Scott's example and precept. But above all, to be a landlord meant to have care of the people and the land, more specially in time of their distress; and money was pouring in on him when other people, even dukes, were pinched. He spent on land and on employment on land money which might, quite blamelessly, have been laid out on foreign travel, or on excursions to London—where he could taste his fame. We need give him no particular credit for resisting such inducements, for he was strongly drawn to Abbotsford, to watch his planting and to superintend his building. There is truth in what Carlyle says about the outlay on knickknackery and upholstery. But it must be remembered again that the workers also at Abbotsford became in a way part of his retinue; the head mason was hardly less of a friend and companion than Tom Purdie. In short, Scott poured his talent out like water, and a stream of gold came back; in a time of straitness, he distributed that stream, giving employment shrewdly and rationally—and above all, wherever he gave employment he was giving also, and getting, human kindness. Carlyle forgot that.

The truth is that Carlyle overlooks one side of Scott. Carlyle himself only intervened in public life as a prophet: Scott's pretensions were more modest. Throughout his career, he thought of himself chiefly as an active and prominent citizen, and he valued himself much more on his qualities as a citizen than on his literary achievements. Indeed, in these years he was moved to ask for a post which would have given him a more definite and normal public standing. Judgeships were then, even more than now, bestowed on supporters of the party in power; Scott was a good Tory and he saw no reason why he should not urge his claim to be a Baron of the Exchequer. His first thought was to consult his clan chief, "without whose countenance," he wrote to the Duke of Buccleuch, "it would be folly in me to give the matter a second thought." Money was not the object; the difference in income between what he would receive as judge and his joint salaries as Sheriff

and as Clerk of the Courts would be only £400 a year. "But there is a difference in the rank and also in the leisure afforded by a Baron's situation."

The matter was never pressed; and the Duke of Buccleuch's death which happened shortly after, seems to have ended all Scott's thoughts of continuing his application. But it is worth remembering that Scott, who had a high respect for the profession of the law, thought himself qualified for its higher offices; and the best professional opinion of the time supported his view.

Lockhart quotes the saying of Lord Cockburn, a great Whig lawyer, to a young Whig gentleman who expressed the opinion that Scott except as a writer was a mediocrity. "I have the misfortune to think differently from you," said Cockburn; "in my humble opinion Walter Scott's *sense* is a still more wonderful thing than his *genius*."

Genius apart—leaving out the special creative gift—there was in Walter Scott enormous energy, immense erudition swiftly mobilised by memory, a rare power of marshalling statement so that it could be easily followed—and, what Lord Cockburn presumably meant by "*sense*," a shrewd, solid, well-balanced appraisal of character, of opinions and of facts.

Cockburn's estimate of Scott's general abilities would still be maintained among his countrymen. Recently, a well-known Scottish writer on historical subjects thought of writing an appreciation of Scott as historian, for in that quality the poet and novelist seemed to him to rank high. He consulted a friend, who was an eminent Scottish judge, about the project. The friend replied that he himself had thought for similar reasons, of writing on Scott as an authority on Scottish law, and had confided this intention to a friend, a professor of economics in a Scottish university. The economist also had been interested, because he, it appeared, had thought of writing an essay to treat Scott as one of the soundest authorities on economic subjects.

The story proves at least that Scott after a century is not lightly regarded by his own people; but still more it brings out the range of the man's knowledge.

There is no need to discuss his energy; it asserted itself conspicuously at this time in the carrying through of a project which had originated during his talk with the Prince Regent in 1815. At the time of the Union with Scotland, it was stipulated that the Scottish Regalia should be never removed from the kingdom of Scotland: and they were accordingly left in a strong-room, bolted and barred. But a rumour grew up that the ancient crown had on some pretext been taken to London. Early in the eighteenth century Commissioners under the Sign Manual opened the room and saw the locked chest lying under a century's layers of dust. But no keys were forthcoming, and curiosity remained unchanged as to what the chest might contain—until Scott bestirred himself and a new Commission was appointed—with Scott at its tail. On February 4th, 1818, the chest was burst open and the Regalia were found intact.

Next day, Scott and some of the other Commissioners revisited the Castle with ladies of their families. Scott's eldest daughter, now a girl of eighteen, had already become greatly his confidant, and his talks with her had so wrought her up that when the lid was opened, she nearly fainted and made as if to withdraw. Then one of the other Commissioners, less impressed than the Minstrel by the associations of these symbolic jewels, made as if to put the crown on the head of one of the ladies present. Sophia Scott was roused from her faintness by her father's voice crying out, in a tone "something between anger and despair" (so she told Lockhart), "By God, no." The culprit put down the jewel with embarrassment; Scott whispered, "Pray forgive me," and, seeing his daughter deadly pale, led her out, and home silently; but his arm still shook with the violence of his emotion. It was present to his mind, as it was not to his fellow-Commissioner's, that these symbols had been saved from capture in the seventeenth century by a woman's courage, and had been preserved by the fidelity of an old and needy couple—who, it is said, suffered torture rather than disclose their hiding-place. They were to Scott sacred symbols; and they were symbols of his nation.

In this matter Scott did not labour without reward. Great public interest was aroused; everyone wanted to see the treasure; and it was suggested that a Keeper of the Jewel Room should be appointed whose salary could be covered by a small admission charge. Scott immediately set to work and succeeded in getting this small post for his friend Captain Adam Ferguson.

These matters have importance, because they probably weighed with Scott when, at the close of 1818, he received intimation that the Regent wished to confer a baronetcy on him. There was no question but that the honour was designed for the writer; yet probably it affected Scott's decision that he could also be regarded as a prominent and public spirited citizen. Unquestionably, for we have his own statement, the way to acceptance was eased by news which reached him at this time that Mrs. Scott's brother, Mr. Carpenter, had died childless in India, leaving the reversion of his capital to his sister's children. Scott believed it to amount to £40,000; it proved to be no more than half this; but it was a large addition to the prospective family fortunes. Characteristically, Scott, as in allegiance bound, consulted the Duke of Buccleuch, and Scott of Harden, "who as heads of my clan and the source of my gentry are good judges of what I ought to do"; and they both held, so he told Joanna Baillie, that he ought to "accept an honour directly derived from the source of honours and neither begged nor bought, as is the usual fashion."

To Morritt, who shared his taste for genealogy, he wrote more freely.

"After all, if one must speak for themselves, I have my quarters and emblazonments, free of all stain but Border theft and High Treason, which I hope are gentlemanlike crimes; and I hope Sir Walter Scott will not sound worse than Sir Humphry Davy, though my merits are as much under his, in point of utility, as can well be imagined. But a name is something, and mine is the better of the two. Set down this flourish to the account of national and provincial pride, for you must know we have more Messieurs de Sotenville<sup>1</sup> in our Border counties

<sup>1</sup> See Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

than anywhere else in the Lowlands—I cannot say for the Highlands."

There were probably great rejoicings at Abbotsford; and Lockhart notes that Lady Scott "openly and gaily" exulted in becoming "her ladyship." Also Tom Purdie, of his own motion, altered the brand on the sheep to "S.W.S."; and "S.W.S." became one of the by-words of the family, as a designation for its head.

Length of service naturally added to Tom's sense of proprietorship in the estate—and in all belonging to it. It is recorded that when he accompanied Sir Walter with one of his friends over the plantations and Scott remarked that "this should be a good season for the young trees," Tom put in his word. "I'm thinking, too, it should be a good season for our buiks."

These years are perhaps the happiest to contemplate of Scott's life, and we do not lack for pleasant pictures of him. Washington Irving has left one, which if Lockhart is right, belongs to 1817 (not 1816, as Irving dates it). The first impression was dogs, of course—packs of them; after which came forth Scott himself, "limping up the gravel walk, aiding himself by a stout walking stick but moving rapidly and with vigour." Maida was by his side, courteous, and disdaining the pack's clamour. The tourist visitor found himself "committed for a visit of several days"—and we are the debtors to Scott's hospitality. We owe to it Irving's record of Scott's saying: "If I did not see the heather at least once a year, I think I should die": we owe to it the visitor's impression of Laidlaw, "a cherished and confidential friend rather than a dependant." It was Laidlaw and his wife that Scott asked to meet the American guest at dinner; for, said he, "I wished to show you some of our really excellent plain Scotch people; not fine gentlemen and ladies, for such you can meet anywhere, and they are everywhere the same." Abbotsford was then the "delightful vine-covered little cottage," matching "the simple yet hearty and hospitable style in which its master lived



therein." Scott of course "appeared like a man of leisure who had nothing to do but bask in the sunshine and amuse himself."—Everyone who visited Scott had that same impression to report.

It was a great part of his loveliness that he should thus lay himself out, not to please, but to give pleasure. He accepted the desire for his company with perfect simplicity and hospitality. If visitors wished to enjoy with him what he enjoyed, he took pains to be at their disposal; and if they brought their own contribution, no host was ever more ready to welcome and set in relief the wit, the knowledge and the fame of his friends. All the men of celebrity whom Scott knew, and they were so diverse as Byron and Wordsworth, had this in common; they were at their best and most likeable in his presence. So much is plain from their report of him, from his report of them.

There were certainly greater men among the great of his time; but except perhaps Nelson whom Scott never met, none at once so great and so lovable; and never was his loveliness more simple, unassuming and genial than in these years of his unbounded prosperity.

It was in these years that Lockhart came into his life. They met first in May 1818, and talked of German literature and of Goethe, whom the younger man had seen, and of the beauty of Goethe's face. That set Scott talking of Byron, the only poet he had seen who could come up to an artist's notion of a poet; "and the prints give one no impression of him; the lustre is there but it is not lighted up." Byron's countenance is *a thing to dream of*."

A few days later, Lockhart was asked to take over the historical work on the *Edinburgh Register*, for which Scott was responsible; and so there were many meetings, at first in Castle Street. Lockhart has left a perfect description of this study with its ranged books, all in perfect repair and treated not as tools, but as objects of affection. One picture only found room on the walls—a portrait of Claverhouse. No other face, perhaps, so haunted Scott's imagination.

"And there was Claverhouse, as beautiful as when he lived, with his long dark curled locks streaming down over his laced buff coat, and his left hand always on his right spule-blade, to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made. He sat apart from them all and looked at them with a melancholy haughty countenance."

Who that remembers Wandering Willie's Tale in *Redgauntlet* can forget that passage?

Readers must go to Lockhart for the detailed description; but it is necessary to borrow as much as will introduce another of Scott's intimates, whose abode was on the library ladder.

"On the top step of this convenience, Hinse of Hinsfeldt (so called from one of the German *Kinder-märchen*), a venerable tom-cat, fat and sleek, and no longer very locomotive, usually lay watching the proceedings of his master and Maida with an air of dignified equanimity; but when Maida chose to leave the party, he signified his inclinations by thumping the door with his huge paw, as violently as ever a fashionable footman handled a knocker in Grosvenor Square; the Sheriff rose and opened it for him with courteous alacrity—and then Hinse came down purring from his perch, and mounted guard by the footstool, *vice* Maida absent upon furlough."

When Lockhart, with his friend Wilson (Christopher North), went down for the first time to Abbotsford in the autumn of that year, he found that Hinse used to go out for walks in the Shirra's tail, and when a hare was started, joined the chase with Maida and all the Peppers and Mustards.

The piper, John of Skye, was by this time a standing institution, and when company was present he attended in the philabeg, strutting and playing his pibrochs on the green before the dining-room windows, till he came in when the cloth was drawn, to take off his bicker-full of Glenlivet.

All these are happy scenes; but already another side to the canvas began to show at times. In 1817, for the first time since his boyhood, Scott's health gave way. Cramps in the stomach seized him, and in March of that year a dinner-party was broken up because the access came on

with such violence that he actually screamed with pain and fled. He knew the causes well enough—not only constant overwork but violent changes of routine.

"I take enough of exercise and enough of rest," he wrote to Morritt, "but unluckily they are like a Lapland year, divided as one night and one day. In the vacation I never sit down; in the session time I seldom rise up."

The trouble abated, but recurred at intervals. In the spring of 1819 it came back with violence, and on the 4th of April, he wrote to Southey after crises that had lasted "in the utmost anguish" from eight to ten hours.

"If I had not the strength of a team of horses I could never have fought through it. I did not lose my senses, because I resolved to keep them, but I thought once or twice they would have gone overboard, top and top-gallant. I should be a great fool, and a most ungrateful wretch, to complain of such afflictions as these. My life has been, in all its private and public relations, as fortunate perhaps as was ever lived, up to this period; and whether pain or misfortune may lie behind the dark curtain of futurity, I am already a sufficient debtor to the bounty of Providence to be resigned to it. Fear is an evil that has never mixed with my nature, nor has even unwonted good fortune rendered my love of life tenacious; and so I can look forward to the possible conclusion of these scenes of agony with reasonable equanimity, and suffer chiefly through the sympathetic distress of my family."

The letter was resumed ten days later, in terms that show he had been uncertain of the issue. Lockhart saw him that spring, and found, not only that he had lost flesh till his clothes hung about him and that his countenance was yellow as in jaundice, but that his hair "which a few weeks before was slightly speckled with grey, had gone almost totally snow-white."

Only his eyes kept their lustre; but he talked easily of what he had been through, and told how much he had feared his mind was going, and to test himself, tried to put into English a German ballad. "You shall see what came of it," he said, and sent his daughter for the version which he had dictated to her. It was *The Noble Moringer*.

More extraordinary things have to be told of his mental exertions during this illness, which did not end then; but one trait shall close this chapter. There was a night in the summer of 1819 when he despaired of recovery, and sent for his children to say good-bye. He spoke to them, "giving them advice one by one," and then—so his daughter told Lockhart afterwards—told them that, for himself, he was "unconscious of ever having done any man an injury or omitted any fair opportunity of doing any man a benefit." Words of religious humility and of exhortation followed, which need not be repeated. His last sentence was, "—Now leave me, that I may turn my face to the wall."

They left him; he fell into a deep sleep, and when he woke the crisis was over.

His own judgment on his own life has no air of presumption. It was a wonderful thing for a man so truth-loving to be able to say.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FROM "THE ANTIQUARY" TO "THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN"

1816-18

IF Scott drew, or at least adumbrated, two aspects of his own personality in Edward Waverley and Colonel Mannering—Waverley being the hidden underlying self, and Mannering the man that was shown to the world in casual acquaintance—he drew them under conditions and in circumstances that were never those of Walter Scott. In *The Antiquary* he created a personage, absolutely and entirely unlike Walter Scott; it is sufficient to say that Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck puts from him in horror the idea of getting on a spirited horse—but Scott endowed this character with a host of his own peculiarities. The only steed that Mr. Oldbuck mounted willingly was a hobby-horse, and of these creatures he had a lavish stud. Probably Scott's original idea was to make game of himself and of all other antiquaries. They were a widespread freemasonry in which he was fully initiated. But the friendly humour extended its scope, and in widening it approached to satire on the kindred foibles of genealogical pretensions—in short, on the deep-seated vanity, which showed itself, for instance, when Scott wrote that Sir Humphry Davy had certainly done more useful work, but that Sir Walter Scott was the better name. Sir Arthur Wardour's pride of Norman descent comes near to craziness, but it is matched by the Highland captain's; and in the last resort, Jonathan Oldbuck himself

for all his shrewdness and solid footing in the prose of affairs, is only a little less concerned than Hector MacIntyre or the baronet of Knockwinnock to magnify his own descent from a stock neither Gael nor Norman, but Teutonic—with a famous mediæval printer in the line of ancestry.

But there is no use speculating on Scott's original intention. He wrote once to Lady Louisa Stuart (on January 31st, 1817:)

"I sometimes think my fingers set up for themselves, independent of my head; for twenty times I have begun a thing on a certain plan, and never in my life adhered to it (in a work of iragination, that is) for half an hour together."

It is quite improbable that he ever intended Edie Ochiltree to be the hero of his book; yet the old gaberlunzie beggar dominates the whole, as Meg Merrilies towers over all in *Guy Mannering*. What a dialogue Scott could have made between the two of them! Yet he might have objected that it would be a bad grouping; the contrast would not be strong enough; they are too much in the same category of creation. Certainly, if he tried it he would have shown us Meg at her most terror-striking and Edie as the humorist that he never ceases to be. The king's old bedesman is seen throughout with humour; yet none the less he takes his part in the most tragic passages of the book, and some of the finest sayings are his by right. There is no figure more Shakespearian in all literature outside of Shakespeare. For once, there is a passage quotable: yet even so, how it loses by being torn from its context! Several pages tell how Isabella Wardour and her father are caught by tide and storm under the cliffs, and how Edie, coming to turn them back, is too late to save either them or himself from being cut off: how they hurry to round a point which shall give them sight of the rock that marks the way as passable, only to find it swallowed up in sheets of foaming breakers. The old man's countenance fell, and Sir Arthur cried out: "My child, my child!"

“‘My father! my dear father!’ his daughter exclaimed, clinging to him—‘and you too, who have lost your own life in endeavouring to save ours!’

‘That’s not worth the counting,’ said the old man. ‘I hae lived to be weary o’ life; and here or yonder—at the back o’ a dyke, in a wreath o’ snaw, or in the wame o’ a wave, what signifies how the auld gaberlunzie dies?’

‘Good man,’ said Sir Arthur, ‘can you think of nothing?—of no help?—I’ll make you rich—I’ll give you a farm—I’ll——’

‘Our riches will be soon equal,’ said the beggar, looking out upon the strife of the waters—‘they are sac already; for I hae nae land, and you would give your fair bounds and barony for a square yard of rock that would be dry for twal hours’.”

The chapter which leads up to this adventure has been broad, almost farcical comedy, recounting the quarrel between rival antiquaries and genealogists which ended in Sir Arthur’s hurried departure; the chapter which follows giving detail of the rescue and escape, passes back into humour, for Oldbuck is again on the scene. But it brings on other actors who are also cast for tragedy—the fisherman Saunders Mucklebackit and his family.

It is not necessary to tell—and to attempt it would mean recounting the book’s whole intricate plot—how this household is connected with the main intrigue. But within the four walls of the fisherman’s hovel we assist at a series of tragic moments—the first of them, simple and elemental. In it Scott has accomplished what few have even attempted: he has rendered a passion of grief in the roughest type of hardbitten fisherman—not the Gael, but the Norse Scot,—savage and voiceless by the body of his son and ~~comrade~~, mastering himself till the coffin, which he will not accompany, has left the house, and then flinging himself on the bed in a convulsion of dumb sobbing. Mucklebackit has few sentences to say in the book, but every one of them might hold its place in some of the old Icelandic sagas.

Very different, and not without touches of melodrama, is the other tragedy centring upon the figure of the fisherman’s mother, once maid to the Countess of Glenallan, and

now a half demented sibyl—in whom nothing but memory can waken the fierce creature that she was. But when it does, we feel through her the presence of her still more formidable mistress, as if the dead Countess, whose crime her vassal assisted, were still moving on the scene. If it were only that Scott had made us feel how this utter identification of the retainer with the will of a hereditary lord bound woman to woman, no less than man to man, the book would be notable. But apart from that, not even the touch of melodrama prevents Elspeth Mucklebackit from being a figure of high poetry.

Byron was well justified when he wrote to Moore that the Waverley Novels were "a new kind of literature." Fielding and Richardson and Sterne and Goldsmith had each in his way done wonderful things with the prose novel; but none of them had blended in it the broadest comedy with the most picturesque romance; none of them had lifted it ever for one moment to the height of tragedy. Neither had any one of them displayed the same fertility of genial invention.)

For a single instance: old Elspeth, hearing of the Countess' burial, resolves to unbosom herself of an evil secret and makes Edie her messenger to carry a token to her mistress's son, the Earl of Glenallan. The choice is perfectly in accord with the usage of such a countryside, but through it great possibilities are opened to the novelist. With sound knowledge and insight Scott makes of Meg Merrilies and the gaberlunzie, who move outside the ruts of life, persons far more highly coloured in their discourse, far more imaginative, and to use a current phrase, far nearer the artist's temperament, than either the ordinary peasant, or even so educated a man as Mr. Oldbuck of Monkbarns. They are also more resourceful; and Edie, for his errand, must consider how he is to win admission to the Earl who lives in cloistered seclusion. Instantly Scott's invention furnishes the scene of the almsgiving, where Edie, reconnoitring for an opening, recognises an old soldier comrade in Lord Glenallan's porter; and no direct description of the effect produced



by Elspeth's token on the nobleman to whom it was delivered could be so eloquent as Francie Macraw's words when he comes back to the gaberlunzie:

"I am nae seere gin ye be Edie Ochiltree o' Carrick's Company in the Forty-twa, or gin ye be the deil in his likeness."

Scott only needed a piece of machinery here; but he could not help himself, and he created a living man in Francie Macraw, the Catholic Highland soldier, promoted to be a nobleman's porter, yet standing by the Presbyterian lowlander, his "auld front rank man," though it should cost him his portership. The few pages which tell of their meeting and parting show a master's hand.

The faults in *The Antiquary*, and they are plentiful, lie in an artificial plot, the caricature of the alleged adept Dousterswivel, who preys on Sir Arthur's superstition, and (perhaps more seriously) in the exaggeration of characteristics in Sir Arthur, in Hector MacIntyre and in Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck of Monkbarns himself. They are "humours" rather than men; though Mr. Oldbuck on occasion can become a man. All his absurdities drop from him in the Mucklebackits' stricken house; when the father refuses to take his traditional place, Monkbarns, the laird, steps in, to lift the head of the coffin, and by this honour to the dead earns more gratitude than by long years of carefully administered beneficence.

But in this book, and in a dozen others, Scott does unquestionably overdo the emphasis on certain tricks of manner and speech, eccentricities rather than expressions of nature; and we see where he went to for his models. These belong to the technique of the drama rather than the novel; and he forgot that what is bearable and justifiable in the compass of a play becomes tedious in the slower-moving written fiction.

It should be noted that in these first three novels the author was coming steadily nearer to Scotland of his own day. *Waverley* presents the Scotland of 1745; in *Guy*

*Mannerings* the main action passes just before the French Revolution; but in *The Antiquary* we find Mr. Oldbuck describing with broad humour that arming of the citizens in which Scott himself took part; and the crisis of the book comes in consequence of a false alarm, like that upon which he rode back a hundred miles from Gilsland to the Border rendezvous.

In his next venture, Scott, for the first time in a prose romance, went clean back beyond all contact through living memory. The action of *The Black Dwarf* passes in the reign of Queen Anne; that of *Old Mortality* in the time of James II.

In this case, two novels, making four volumes, were published together under the title *Tales of My Landlord*; and Scott invented a Mr. Jedediah Cleishbotham, who was to be the putter-forth of a manuscript entrusted to him by a Mr. Peter Pattieson, assistant to Jedediah in the school at Gandercleugh. We could have well spared Jedediah, and in my ideal Reader's Edition of the novels, he should disappear. Scott had a heavy and prolix manner with this kind of humour.

The *Black Dwarf* broke the series of successes by a failure, and the fact that it is much shorter than the rest is accounted for by Scott himself in his Introduction of 1830. "A friendly critic" who saw the manuscript in progress thought that "the idea of the Solitary was of a kind too revolting and more likely to disgust than to interest the reader." As Scott considered his adviser—namely, Ballantyne—a good judge of public opinion, he "got off his subject by hastening the story to an end as fast as it was possible, and huddled into one volume a tale which was designed to occupy two."

But we may very fairly surmise that Scott felt his own doubts before he asked for criticism, and that his invention did not run strong. The story is of value only for one thing—its portrait of the young border farmer, Hobbie Elliott, a person not so attractive as Dandie Dinmont, yet rather for lack of opportunity to display his qualities than for lack of the same vigorous life.

The failure did not cause even momentary harm to Scott's reputation, for *Old Mortality*, the *Black Dwarf's* yokefellow was well able to pull for two. Lockhart thought this "the *Marmion* of the novels"; even Scott himself has an indulgent word for it.

If Lockhart meant that for sheer power, for the creation of personages whose main characteristic was force of spirit and of body, Scott never surpassed it, we may all agree. But since it is the purpose of this book to recommend the *Waverley Novels* to a generation which inclines to neglect them, I may set down the fact that a finely sensitive listener, for whom *Guy Mannering* had lightened long nights of illness, could find no pleasure in *Old Mortality*. The whole was too dark and contentious. In one word, whereas *Guy Mannering* gave life to a number of people whom Scott cherished, and to others whom he could frankly detest, in *Old Mortality* he filled his stage with creatures for whom he has no instinctive sympathy. They have faiths that they will die for, and he respects them; he can even feel the poetry of their harsh speech; but, in a sense, throughout this novel, we are less in the company of Walter Scott and more in the company of his characters.

Here again, as in *Waverley*, the fortunes of an individual have to be followed through scenes of civil war with which they become involved; once more, rebellion has its moment of triumph, but becomes in the end the losing side; and once more the hero, though he fights like a man, gives a very half-hearted allegiance to the rebel cause, and once more he thereby forfeits sympathy. But Scott's heart never goes out to the Covenanters as it did to the Jacobites—though perhaps his reason can find more to say for the part played by Henry Morton than for the actions of Edward Waverley.

This imperfect sympathy no doubt explains why the book is less pleasurable than some of the others. We may find it hard to understand that Scott was bitterly blamed by those who cherished the memory of the martyrs

whose tombstones it was the pious care of "Old Mortality" to tend and renew; it amazes us to hear that Lady Nairne, who wrote some of the best Scottish lyrics, refused to meet the man who had given the representation of Covenanters which is found in this book. But there is no question that the hero of Scott's novel is Claverhouse, just as in *Paradise Lost* the true hero is Satan.

Over against the royalist leader is set the terrible fanatic, Balfour of Burley, chief slayer of Archbishop Sharpe on Magus Moor—a man of blood and iron. Behind him and with him are ranks of the Covenanting leaders, men nourished on the Old Testament; and none could have framed their speech but one who had the Old Testament literally by heart. Over and above that must have gone endless reading of their peculiar literature, all the Lives and scriptures of these grim saints.

On the other side of the canvas, where Claverhouse is leader, are a group of people sketched with a lighter mind: old Lady Margaret Bellenden who falls into the category of "humours" rather than of real characters, with her perpetual harping on King Charles's disjune at Tilli-tudlem: her brother, Major Bellenden, probably very like Scott's own soldier brother, or his friend Adam Fergusson; Gudyill, the old family butler, a veteran who is glad to mount his culverins and falconets again for service; and above all there is Cuddie Headrigg the ploughman, who, like Morton, has his body in one camp and his heart in the other. Cuddie belongs to the same order of creation as Dandie Dinmont. Scott never looks at him without amusement and affectionate delight; but no one can fail to note the distinction felt rather than made throughout, between Cuddie, the servant, and the yeoman, Dandie, who never called anyone master. Cuddie is a stout fellow and loyal to the master whom he insists on serving; but he has never known freedom, for he was the son of a domineering saint. Mause Headrigg is the proof that Scott realised how much more indomitable and persistent than any other animal is the woman with a cause; and

Cuddie, having borne the yoke in his youth, does not escape it in manhood; his helpmeet, Jenny Dennison that was, could talk him over to the course of prudence when his generosity wanted to go a different way.

Still, it is Cuddie's combination of simplicity and shrewdness that 'saves his master at the crisis of this story's grimmest scene, when, after the battle of Bothwell Bridge, Morton falls into the hands of a group of fanatics who purpose to put him to death when the clock's hand, reaching midnight, shows that the Sabbath day is ended—perhaps the most strongly drawn of the pictures that convey the temper of these "wild western whigs."

The weakness of the book lies as usual in the love passages, which are terribly stilted in expression. A young man wooing, whose chances were heavily handicapped by incompatibility of position, should have called out "all Scott's sympathy; yet probably a kind of shyness tied his pen.—But if Scott went at his own love-making like Morton, it is no wonder that he did not win.

The story, when once the action starts, is splendid and vigorous; the skirmish at Drumclog has life in every detail, and the siege of Tillitudlem matches it.

At the close, the break in time interrupts the action awkwardly, yet the recognition scenes which follow are very good, and Scott has skilfully matched the passage in which Jenny Dennison (Mrs. Cuddie Headrigg) detects Morton's identity, but will not own to it, with the other when the cross old housekeeper at Milnwood welcomes back her nursling with a sudden burst of joy.—Morton's dog here plays the part of Argos in the *Odyssey*.

But the marvel throughout is Scott's command of Biblical phraseology, and his power on occasion to make Ephraim MacBriar, the fanatical preacher, for instance, speak the language of Milton's prose, yet speak it with a living accent. As for Burley, he rivals Dirk Hatteraick in the suggestion of physical violence, and matches it with a moral strength that gives him command when he enters

the scene. Perhaps no other novel of them all has a gallery of living portraits. 275

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After *Old Mortality* came *Rob Roy*—and this time Constable was the publisher. John Ballantyne made the bargain, which as usual included taking off some hundred pounds' worth of obsolete stock. We have it under John Ballantyne's hand that he personally stood to make at least £600 by the bargain, and did actually make £1,200. A literary agent's is a well-paid profession. The bargain was made at Abbotsford, where Scott imparted some of the story to Constable and Ballantyne, extemporising a dialogue between Bailie Nicol Jarvie and Rob Roy the Highland cateran.

The Bailie was one of Scott's favourites among his characters, and he delighted to follow out the workings of a Highland connection in the borough magistrate and of some Lowland blood in the cateran. Rob Roy is the Highlander somewhat modified by Lowland life, and Scott has the more liking for him on that account.

Among the persons of quality, Diana Vernon must be accounted Scott's least unsuccessful heroine. She was greatly admired in her day and generation; and she certainly does not lack personality. But his own inclination was evidently for ladies of a milder mould than Diana or Flora MacIvor.

Last of this first and greater group of the novels comes *The Heart of Midlothian*, in which Scott wrote a story of his native city, lingering over detail with the same affection as he bestowed on his own Border country. And for praise of this, I quote the contemporary verdict of the one woman to whom Scott imparted his secret. Lady Louisa Stuart said from the first that if she had not been told, she would inevitably have found him out; exactly as Morritt wrote after he had finished reading *Waverley*.

"After all, I need not much thank you for your confidence. How could you have hoped that I should not discover you?

Almost in spite of his convictions, Scott was drawn to ceremony in religion; the Puritan in him was suspicious of ritual which the artist and the poet desired. But the core of the matter for him was the effect on what he called "principle," and in the story of Jeanie Deans he shows principle under agonising tests. Davie's younger daughter, the petted beauty Effie, has been seduced; the child born to her is not to be found; and she is on trial for child murder. By the Scots law, her life is forfeit merely on the ground that she concealed the birth; and it can be saved if there is one person who will swear that the girl imparted knowledge of her condition. Her lover cannot appear; he has been deeply implicated in the Porteous riots, which are described with even more than Scott's usual power in the opening; but he gets access to Jeanie, and urges upon her that a bare word, which can never be confuted, will save her sister's life. Two scenes follow—first with the old father, who to the full shares Jeanie's horror of perjury, and yet is so shaken by his feelings that he throws back on her sole conscience the responsibility for decision. Then comes the interview with Effie in prison when the girl counts absolutely on her sister to save her, and then reproaches her in the first bitter words that ever came from her lips. And yet Jeanie stands firm, though her own hopes in life are involved, for the schoolmaster, Reuben Butler, to whom she is bound, could never marry the sister of an executed criminal.

Her only resource lies in her own action, and she makes her way to London and, under Argyll's protecting escort, wins the pardon from the Queen—in a scene which for knowledge and pathos, not untouched by humour, Scott never surpassed.

The book as a whole is perhaps the worst planned of his best ones; it breaks in two, and the latter part, from was "a little Roseneath on the Duke's Highland property, in the action," and to In the earlier part, up to Jeanie's return a moral patient of the piece is nothing to cavil at, except the al interruption of Jeanie's pilgrimage.

Of course there was a motive: Scott wanted to link up the plot with more of Madge Wildfire's history. Madge is another of the creations like Meg Merrilies, less securely established on solid earth than Meg, yet at times a marvelously effective figure. Into her mouth are put many scraps of verse, which like those attributed to Davie Gellatly in *Waverley*, and to Meg, are almost first-rate poetry. But among them is one song, "Proûd Maisie is in the Wood," which ranks with old Elspeth's ballad of "The Red Harlaw," among the imperishable jewels of Scottish lyric.

Mr. Saddletree, the legally-minded saddler, is again in the category of "humours," but Mrs. Saddletree is excellent. Ratcliffe, first thief, then jailer, is a good figure, but Dumas might have done him, or Hugo: Jeanie and her father are totally beyond the reach of either of these masters. In Effie, Scott has for this once only given us a true and moving picture of a lovely young woman passionately in love. Everything about her rings true; and even when we meet her in the end as a great lady, she is natural. One touch brings it out. With Jeanie Lady Staunton is once more the simple and affectionate sister; but to Jeanie's surprise she orders the Duke's agent about at her will. And when Jeanie speaks of it, "Everybody always does what I tell them to," says the established beauty.

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There is not much more to be said about these creations even by way of the most desultory criticism. Gittle that lovers of literature cannot read Scott—just as cannot give lovers of poetry stick at Milton. It is their ming women; Some readers are deterred by the Scotch, when, even, doubtedly makes a difficulty, for in the best of the capable many of the best passages are written in this often; yet, the English tongue. A small effort is required woman.) who were not fortunate enough to be brougomen who Scotland or in Ulster—yet much less than is needed her better and understand Robert Burns, one of the great the composers. And in fact when the *Waverley Novels* the sense



a public eager to read them made shift to do so with enthusiasm.

We are told now that their longwindedness repels this generation, though it professes to read Marcel Proust and Romain Rolland and Mr. Theodore Dreiser—and has gone back to Anthony Trollope, a writer whose methods were as leisurely as Scott's, and whose considerable merits are simply not comparable with the master's. Nobody need care to deny that there is much in Scott which could be compressed with advantage, and not a little that would be better left out. But no man or woman reads under an obligation to peruse every syllable, and the true way to read Scott is to do after Scott's own method, and skip what is tedious. (The worst possible way to approach this author is to treat his works as text-books—and it is in modern times one of the most frequent approaches.) Scott, on the whole, is no more an author for children than is Shakespeare—though a book-loving child can find paradise in his pages.)

But there is one matter on which a word should be said. Scott is held to be superficial and therefore negligible because he does not investigate the emotions and appetites arising out of sex.—Let us get at the facts. In each and all of his novels we are shown a young man strongly under the influence of a monogamous attachment—so strongly that other women are in no danger from him, nor he from them. With great respect to more recent novelists, this she-monon is by no means rare. As to the quality of criminal man's love and of the young woman's answer thereto, Scott is undoubtedly careful to avoid anything which would have called "luscious." He takes the winsome side of love, for granted. To this extent knowledge that the main interest of the story centres never so because he makes no attempt to represent the intensity of desire which has been so often the theme of noble writing. Perhaps the one exception was "a" of Effie Deans, whom he shows under the action of a passion so strong that it changes her in the nature almost into unkindness against those

whom she loves best, when she sees them as <sup>aspects of</sup> ~~as~~ <sup>to</sup> her desire.

But, broadly speaking, Scott avoids this whole order of ideas: he assumes chastity in his heroes, and does not argue about it, though he is perfectly well aware that ordinary good-natured men like his Laird of Ellengowan have frailties which they mention without excessive penitence. That goes in to make up the picture of slipshod conduct in a good-natured, affectionate but slightly pitiful personage.

Admitting, then, that Scott has little to tell us about all this side of humanity, is he therefore superficial? We ought to ask ourselves whether in the course of life we find it important to know much about the sexual concerns of those with whom we have to act. Undoubtedly these topics furnish matter for gossip; but to know a man means, as a rule, to have ascertained whether he has courage, and if so what kind of courage, the quarrelsome the temperate; whether he has loyalty; whether he has gratitude, and can endure to be under an obligation; whether his judgment is sound; whether he can give an order clearly or execute one with intelligence; and, in short, we face a world of considerations into which the question of his sexual appetites and affections enters only to the same degree that we must know whether he is liable to get drunk.

On all this range of topics, (Scott will offer us sound philosophy, with as various and as pregnant illustrations as any novelist in the language. There is very little that a man needs to know about man that Scott cannot give him guidance on. He is less of a clerk concerning women; and that is probably the reason why few women, even among the most discriminating novel readers, are capable of enjoying him. Jeanie Deans cannot be forgotten; yet Jeanie is rather a feminine conscience than a woman.)

But there are always a certain number of women who like the hill better than the valley, the heather better than the ploughland; and these would choose the companionship of one who carries with him always the sense

a public <sup>of open</sup> spaces, rather than listen to the wittiest tongue ever <sup>that</sup> played scalpel. Such as these will always be numbered among Sir Walter's disciples, followers where he leads the hunt.

Let us admit that we of that allegiance count the hours spent with Scott much like a good day in the fresh air. It is not a laborious discipleship. He is none of your difficult authors—but that does not stamp him as inferior. Answer should be given to the *advocatus diaboli*, who in this case is called Thomas Carlyle.

"Your Shakespeare," says Carlyle, "fashions his characters from the heart outwards; your Scott fashions them from the skin inwards, never getting near the heart of them."

That is the sort of telling phrase that a schoolboy instantly gets by rote to reproduce in an examination paper. But what does it mean? Did Shakespeare begin by conceiving Hamlet's heart and proceed to infer his outward semblance? Scott indeed commonly introduces a character with some description of the personal appearance—and Shakespeare never does. One excellent reason is that such description is impossible in a play. But the essential part is this. Scott, having told you at first what his people look like, never again insists on it—except in the case of personages like Meg Merrilies or the Dominie whose physical characteristics were such that no one could cease to be aware of them. It is not even clear that he always visualises his scenes, but this is certain. When Dandie Dinmont speaks, we have no need to be told from whom the words come. He and a score of other characters—Davie Deans and his Jeanie, the Quaker couple in *Redgauntlet*, Bailie Nicol Jarvie, the Master of Ravenswood, or the laird of Monkbarns are all implicit in their actions and utterances. They are not Hamlets or Othellos, but we know them as we know Hamlet and Othello, by what they say and do. Even if we take the characters on whose external traits emphasis is laid—would Carlyle really say that we never got near the heart of Meg Merrilies or Dominie Sampson?

Scott did not probe deep, in comparison with Shakespeare ; he could not create beings of such subtle complexity or such force ; but he saw with clear and candid eyes into human nature, and expressed what he saw, not in long psychological disquisition, not in pretentious rhetoric, but—as Shakespeare did—by producing the sudden act, or the swift word, in which the whole nature is revealed.

## CHAPTER XVII

## THE LAST YEARS OF PROSPERITY

1819-25

THE illness from which Scott was recovering in April 1819, when Lockhart found his hair turned white, did not end with that. There was a violent recurrence in June, after he had returned to the Courts; and in 1820 there were other attacks. Lockhart says that when the Third Series of *Tales of My Landlord* appeared—containing the *Bride of Lammermoor* and *The Legend of Montrose*,—Scott's acquaintances in Edinburgh believed that they must be the last. These two books, which rank only a little below his very best work, had been composed under astounding conditions.

He dictated them on his sick-bed, in part to Laidlaw and in part to John Ballantyne, carrying on the work even when the pain wrung cries from him. Laidlaw would implore him to stop:

“‘Nay, Willie,’ he answered, ‘only see that the doors are fast. I would fain keep all the cry as well as all the wool to ourselves; but as to giving over work, that can only be when I am in woollen.’ John Ballantyne told me, that after the first day, he always took care to have a dozen of pens made before he seated himself opposite to the sofa on which Scott lay, and that though he often turned himself on his pillow with a groan of torment, he usually continued the sentence in the same breath. But when dialogue of peculiar animation was in progress, spirit seemed to triumph altogether over matter—he arose from his couch and walked up and down the room, raising and lowering his voice, and as it were acting the parts.”

That passage from Lockhart shows us far more than the man's indomitable will. The habit of composition had grown so strong that it made a need too strong to be resisted; the brain, crowded with images, demanded outlet for them. Balzac was under the like obsession, and living and working on a regimen far less sane than that which Scott imposed on himself, must pour out his creation in floods, straining the bodily machine till it cracked. Also, the description in itself forces us to realise the essential character of Scott's work. All the passages of simple narrative are really a piecing together of the true creation, which never comes unless when human beings are in interplay, matched and pitted together. The Waverley Novels at their best are like chronicle plays in the Shakespearian manner; narrative fills up the gaps and supplies what is given to the eye by stage representation. Scott's prose when he narrates is very rarely vivid; it is adequate to its purpose and no more; but when it is the prose of spoken speech, it can rise to startling eloquence, to the most moving pathos, or again can flood us with the humour in which a whole nature expresses itself, as a man is expressed by his laughter.

A distinction has to be made. *The Legend of Montrose* was composed under these physical difficulties, but in it Scott is his normal self. Dugald Dalgetty, the professional mercenary soldier, is one of his best known creations; too much, perhaps, a "character part," repeating the same humours, yet at least in one passage of the book turning from a stage figure into a live, valiant and resourceful man. There are not many things of the kind better than those pages which describe his imprisonment in Argyll's stronghold, his encounter with the politic chieftain, and the manner of his escape. Elsewhere, the book is much less good, and Scott's presentment of Montrose falls far short of his Claverhouse. But the novel, as a whole, does not differ in kind from the rest. *The Bride of Lammermoor* does. It was dictated when Scott was so fevered with suffering that he was literally not his own master; the story came from him between his groans and cries, and when it was finished,

## THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

memory of it was gone. He read the book when it was printed as if the work had been by another hand. It is natural then that the narrative should have had a quality not found elsewhere: it is more violent, less balanced; and nowhere else in Scott do we find the picture of a young man passionately in love, flinging himself in a storm of rage and pride against the human obstacles which stand in the way of his passion. Alone of Scott's works it has an entirely and savagely tragic ending. The facts of the history about which Scott built up his romance indeed made such an ending the only one appropriate; the reluctant bride, cut off from the lover of her choice, and forced into marriage by a brutal exercise of domineering will, stabs to death the bridegroom, and is found gibbering in the bridechamber; what can follow but a clearing off in a true Elizabethan riot of destruction? Yet had the story been written by Scott, in his normal health, the strong moderation of his nature might have softened the savagery. As it stands, the whole moves more swiftly, and is carried through more, as it were, in one burst than anything else in his works. Not Shakespeare is recalled here, but the other Elizabethans—Ford, for instance. Indeed, some of the inferior scenes, like those between Bucklaw and Craigengelt, read as if they had been deliberately modelled on Beaumont and Fletcher. The figure of the old retainer Caleb Balderston has been criticised as being overcharged; and it is of course fantastic to imagine a servant who set fire to the old house that the shortcomings of its furniture may not be disclosed. Yet Caleb's pre-occupation with credit for decencies of appearance helps to understanding of that pride in the antique splendour of race and name which sets the young Master of Ravenswood raging against those who could outweigh race and name by money bags.

It is a story of fierce people, and the verisimilitude even of its extravagance is borne out by much in Scottish history. But the special interest for a biographer lies in this: that nowhere else is the hidden self of the maker so openly revealed. Weaving of imaginary scenes did not begin for Walter Scott with the writing of *Waverley*; from childhood

on, his brain had been the theatre where his secret self constantly figured in visionary parts; and whoever reads the *Bride of Lammermoor* may guess what wild work went on in that strange forge of images when Scott, in the first ardour of his youth, found himself a suitor set aside because he was poor. The reasoning man that he was got the better of all such fantasies; traces of the time and memory of the persons concerned in it were burnt deep in his nature, yet in his normal life nothing survived but kindness. But when he was least in control of himself, when delirium had sway, then for once, in wholly altered circumstances, with all the human factors as different as they could be imagined, yet for that once, he let himself portray the fury of a young and gallant man who finds himself, in spite of youth and gallantry and his lady's favour, set aside in love.

As usual, one novel was not published before another was well on its way; and in that same summer of 1819 Scott had begun *Ivanhoe*—of which also the greater part had to be dictated. Seven years later, when he went to Paris, a version of this novel was being played as an opera. "It was strange," he notes in his Journal, "to hear anything like the words which I (then in agony of pain with spasms in my stomach) dictated to William Laidlaw at Abbotsford, now recited in a foreign tongue, and for the amusement of a strange people. I little thought to have survived the completing of this novel." Yet when *Ivanhoe* was published (before the end of 1819), it must have astonished those who thought that the Author of *Waverley* was physically a beaten man. The writing had demanded a *tour de force* never before attempted by him; to set his scene, not only in an unfamiliar country, but at a period when the features of European life were so strange as to seem fantastic. No man could have done it without immense reading; but in Scott's case the reading had begun as far back almost as he could remember, and his mind had been visualising knights in armour since the beginnings of boyhood.

The result was triumphant. In literary value, none of these mediæval tales can compare with the novels of



Scottish life; Scott was so much preoccupied with the effort to get dress and arms and environment present to his new vision that he could not create at ease; but the narrative goes swinging along as lustily as anywhere else—if not more so. English readers were naturally enough enchanted to find their own history the theme, and to be clear of all difficulties from dialect. For immediate popularity none of all the novels reached the same pinnacle as this.

The lasting worth of *Ivanhoe* is that, unlike its predecessors, it is a first-rate book for children, of the kind that love stories of adventure. I testify of what I know, for my introduction to the Waverleys was hearing some chapters of *Ivanhoe*—probably the siege of Front de Bœuf's castle, and the tournament—read aloud to me during an illness. I must have been too young even to question about the name of the book; for, some time after, having the free run of many book-shelves, I came—it seems to me now, by chance—on *Ivanhoe* and realised with a gasp that the whole of this marvellous book was available at my pleasure. Probably I knew that the same man had written "The Stag at eve had drunk his fill," and "Merrily, merrily, bounds the bark," and "Charge, Chester, charge." Children who live in literate households pick these things up without, consciously being told. But most assuredly no one ever ordered or advised me to read this or any Waverley Novel; and from the time I first read one, my delight has lasted and increased. There should be a copy of *Ivanhoe* in reach of every child that can read.

Scott's life from this illness forward runs uneventfully for a few years; the chief happenings in it now began to concern other people. Almost at the moment when *Ivanhoe* appeared, death made a sudden swoop among those near him; his mother, her brother, Dr. Rutherford, and their younger sister Miss Christian Rutherford (rather a sister to Walter Scott than an aunt) died within a few days of each other; and of three nieces who lived with Miss Rutherford, one was struck with paralysis and another died,

chiefly from the shock of all these accumulated losses. Four times in a month the family grave was opened.

Scott's mother had been the chief of all his sources for acquiring a familiar knowledge of past times. She had often spoken with one who remembered seeing Cromwell's entry into Edinburgh; and her own personal memory stretched back far into the eighteenth century. A day or two before her last illness, she had related with the utmost detail the true story on which *The Bride of Lammermoor* was based, marking out all the points in which the novel had departed from it.

Scott says of her, in a letter to Lady Louisa Stuart, that with an income of about three hundred a year she gave away at least a third in charity, "and on the rest lived like a gentlewoman, and even with hospitality more general than seemed to suit her age"; and that she could never be prevailed on to accept any assistance from her son's affluence.

Add to all this the death of the Duke of Buccleuch, which left a strange gap in Scott's world—for his new chieftain was an infant; and it is easy to see that he felt the landmarks shifting rapidly about him. In the same period, too, the first break came in his own home life; for his eldest boy, Walter, joined the 18th Hussars in July 1819. He had been willing to go to the bar, as his father wished; but, Scott concluded ("with no small reluctance," he wrote to his brother) that he should "only spoil an excellent soldier to make a poor and undistinguished gownsman."

But none of the children had till then ever been more than a few nights away from their home, and Scott's first letter to the cornet—who had been ordered to join his regiment in Cork—after conveying a good deal of sound advice (mostly about horseflesh) gives the picture of a dejected household.

With the opening of 1820 came the news that Lockhart desired to marry Sophia, and that she was of the same mind; but this portended no great scatterment, for in the Rhymer's Glen along the banks of Huntly Burn was found a small and pleasantly selected cottage which, with a little mason-work, could be made into a summer abode for the couple;

Lockhart's work, for the time being, kept him, like Scott himself, in Edinburgh during the winter. They were married in April, and when Scott came back to Abbotsford that summer of 1820, his daughter and her husband established themselves at Chiefswood (so the cottage was named) only two miles' walk away, through his own plantations which now covered several hundred acres.

In the month before the Lockhart wedding, Scott had made a journey to London that his baronetcy might be conferred. George IV, who had succeeded to the throne, expressed his pleasure that Sir Walter Scott should be the first creation of his reign, and requested that he would sit to Sir Thomas Lawrence for the first portrait in a series of the King's most distinguished contemporaries, to be hung at Windsor. Chantrey also went to work, and produced a bust which Scott's own family counted the most characteristic likeness of him. It looks, as Chantrey himself said, "as if he were about to break out into some sly, funny old story."

Also Scott met for the first time Allan Cunningham, then clerk of the works at the sculptor's studio. "Allan Cunningham, I am glad to see you," was Scott's first word—holding out both hands—when the stonemason poet came, by appointment, to Miss Dumergue's house. Cunningham, in the days when he was a working stonecutter on Nithsdale, had tramped on foot to Edinburgh that he might see the author of *Marmion* pass in the street. From their first meeting they corresponded as friends, Scott seeking every occasion to help his countryman and comrade in letters.

Young Walter, the tall hussar, was with his father during this visit, and shared in the fêting. He was even taken to "a very quiet dinner at Mr. Arbuthnot's," (where the Duke of Wellington was most intimate), and "heard the great Lord in all his tales of war and Waterloo."

In the spring of 1821 Scott was back in London, on some business concerning the duties of Clerks of Session; and during this absence his daughter's first child was born. John Hugh Lockhart as he was christened, Hugh Littlejohn as

he came to be called, twisted himself fast into the fibres of Sir Walter's life and became part of the saga—and the very heart of the tragedy. At the moment, Scott was simply glad that his daughter was well over the ordeal. Babies as such, had no interest for him; he cared for nothing under the puppy stage.

Apart from her health, his letter of congratulation to Sophia is chiefly concerned with one matter. "I hope Mungo"—(the Lockharts' Newfoundland)—"approves of the child, for that is a serious point . . . There are no dogs in the hotel where I lodge, but a tolerably conversible cat who eats a dish of cream with me in the morning."

In July of that year he fared back to London for the coronation—partly tempted by the steamship *City of Edinburgh* (which he said should be called "the New Reekie"). He investigated this novelty. "It runs at nine knots an hour against wind and tide (*me ipso teste*) with a deck as long as a frigate's to walk on and to sleep on also if you like. . . . This reconciles the speed and certainty of the mail coach with the ease and convenience of being on ship-board. . . . I scorn to mention economy, though the expense is not one-fifth, and that is something in hard times, especially to me who would always rather travel in a public conveyance than in my domestic's good company in a po-chay."

The ritual of the coronation, with its mediæval features, of course delighted him, and he wrote a long description for E. Lantyne's *Edinburgh Weekly*. But he did not describe how he himself received the second of two compliments which he always cherished in memory. The first of them had come from the dour old Presbyterian farmer, his neighbour at Ashestiel, who, for all his dourness still maintained and tended the turf seat which Scott had arranged at his favourite viewpoint; and he always called the place "the Shirra's knowe." That touched "the Shirra" when he heard it. But the second tribute would have moved any man. Returning from the coronation banquet, Scott missed his carriage, and walking home with a friend, was jammed in the crowd somewhere about Whitehall.

"A space for the dignitaries was kept clear at that point by the Scots Greys. Sir Walter addressed a serjeant of this celebrated regiment, begging to be allowed to pass by him into the open ground in the middle of the street. The man answered shortly that his orders were strict—that the thing was impossible. While he was endeavouring to persuade the serjeant to relent, some new wave of turbulence approached from behind, and his young companion exclaimed in a loud voice, 'Take care, Sir Walter Scott, take care!' The stalwart dragoon, on hearing the name said, 'What! Sir Walter Scott? He shall get through anyhow!' He then addressed the soldiers near him: 'Make room, men, for Sir Walter Scott, our illustrious countryman!' The men answered, 'Sir Walter Scott!—God bless him!'—and he was in a moment within the guarded line of safety."

In August 1822, Scott was able to repay the royal favour; for George IV proposed to visit Scotland, where no Hanoverian prince had set foot except "the butcher," Cumberland. Scotland's loyalty had been sufficiently proven in war against Napoleon; but Scottish Liberals were disposed to take sides against the King in the domestic quarrel between King and Queen. It fell to Sir Walter to stage-manage and popularise the whole pageantry; and in one word, he carried it off with the pipes and tartan. Lockhart does not suppress his satiric vein in recounting how George IV, whom even Scott always mentions in his letters as "our fat friend," came, 'in the promise and bloom of three-score,' to represent Prince Charlie at Holyrood.

Sir Walter gave a month of his life to making the thing go. He wrote a song for the occasion, that went with a swing; he planned the whole pageantry, he put everybody in good humour—yet the Highland susceptibilities and varying claims for procedure and dignity were not less difficult of adjustment than formerly in times of war. Pibroch and pennon were out, from Leith to the High Street; the King was in Stuart tartan, and it was not Scott's fault that a large London alderman had caused himself to be arrayed in the same conspicuous colours, so that there were two Richmonds in the field. Scott himself, by right of his great-great-grandmother, was in Campbell tartan.

wearing trews not kilts. In the middle of all this pageantry there tumbled in unawares on a visit, who but the poet Crabbe, for whose works Scott had the greatest reverence and affection; and this quiet, elderly, English country parson found himself in the middle of plaided and kilted and dirk-bearing persons, whose like he had never conceived to exist.

The first encounter of the bards was delightful. Sir Walter had gone out by boat to board the Royal yacht on its arrival, had been received with open arms and had presented on behalf of the city a St. Andrew's Cross in silver; healths were exchanged in the national liquor, and the Minstrel, playing his gallant part, requested a gift of the glass from which His Majesty had drunk. The glass was wrapped and deposited in the safest pocket, and Scott, returning from his mission, hastened back to welcome Crabbe who was already installed at Castle Street. The poets greeted each other affectionately, and in the expansion of the moment Scott, neglecting to safeguard his coat tails, sat down beside Crabbe; there was a crash, a scream and a gesture of despair; and Scott had reason to be thankful that he wore the trews.

So it went on.\* Crabbe was sufficiently imbued with the spirit of the occasion to think it an honour that Glengarry ever took notice of him, "for there were those, and gentlemen, too, who considered themselves honoured by following in his train." "Sir Walter," he adds in his journal, "was the life and soul of the whole. It was a splendid festivity, and I felt I know not how much younger."

Yet Scott made merry with a sore heart. In the beginning of this year, 1822, his long efforts had succeeded in obtaining a judgeship for his friend William Erskine, who was raised to the Bench as Lord Kinnedder; but within a few weeks, some calumny, "both base and baseless," says Scott, was spread, charging Erskine with an improper liaison; and it so wrought on the mind of this morbidly sensitive man that it poisoned the very springs of life in him. Of all Scott's friends, none was dearer to his heart; though of all Scott's friends Erskine only was physically timid, no sportsman, no horseman, no lover of the open air; and now mere worry

drove him into a fever; he thought himself degraded in the eyes of his friends; he grew delirious, and doctors bled him to exhaustion; and on the day of the king's arrival he died suddenly. Scott, through all the weeks of bustling preparation for the royal visit, had been back and forward by day and by night to his friend's sick bed; and now in the middle of these festivities he had to follow his hearse. Lockhart writes:—

"I am not aware that I ever saw him in such a state of dejection as he was when I accompanied him and his friend, Mr. Thomas Thomson, from Edinburgh to Queensferry, in attendance upon Lord Kinnedder's funeral. Yet that was one of the noisiest days of the royal festival, and he had to plunge into some scene of high gaiety the moment after he returned. As we halted in Castle Street, Mr. Crabbe's mild, thoughtful face appeared at the window, and Scott said, on leaving me, 'Now for what our old friend there puts down as the crowning curse of his poor player in the Borough':

To hide in rant the heart-ache of the night."

A man who maintains so many friendships and so warmly as it was Scott's nature to do feels much when time begins to thin the ranks; and a year earlier a great gap had been made. John Ballantyne, his *Rigdumfunnidos*, died after lingering illness. His last thought was to leave £2,000 to Scott for completion of the library at Abbotsford—not knowing that he departed from life entirely insolvent. All that he was, and all the fun he had out of a merry life, in which he did not stint himself, he owed to Scott; and it is probable that he more than anyone helped, unwittingly, to bring about Scott's defeat in life. But he loved his "illustrious friend" (so both he and James Ballantyne always spoke of Scott), and his love was not worthless. Lockhart tells how he went with Scott to the burial in the Canongate Churchyard, and from a darkened sky the sun shone out suddenly. Looking up, Scott whispered: "I feel as if there would be less sunshine for me from this day forth."

Yet it would be quite wrong to give a doleful picture of Sir Walter's life in this period, when honours and, to all

appearance, prosperity were his in such full measure. There were two sides to his existence, now more marked than ever; and on one of them he was the leading citizen of his native town. He for instance, was Edinburgh's chief spokesman in a sentimental demand for the restitution of "Mons Meg," a great cannon which was removed to the Tower of London after 1745. After long parleyings, Scott succeeded, though not till 1829—when the Duke of Wellington was in power, and Mons Meg, as every visitor to Edinburgh knows, is on the Castle ramparts. Also, as Lockhart tells, he was constantly in demand for the occasional chairmanship of meetings to further public objects, and he was in permanence President of the Royal Society of Scotland—and also Chairman of the newly formed Gas Company. This mediævalist had a keen interest in all the modern applications of science, and Abbotsford was gaslit when such installations were very few.

On the other side of him, Scott was the country land-owning gentleman, with the tastes of his class—adapted to his age. His bodily powers were less; but he could still ride Sybil Grey, an equivalent to Dandie's Duple, and could walk five or six miles with enjoyment. "The greatest advance of age which I have yet found," he wrote to Lord Montagu, "is liking a *cat*, an animal I detested—and becoming fond of a garden, an art which I despised; but I suppose the indulgent mother of Nature has pets and hobby-horses suited to her children at all ages."

It has to be admitted also that house-building and house-furnishing were hobby-horses entirely to the liking of a gentleman not so active as he was; and that they were expensive hobbies to maintain. All sorts of people sent him all sorts of curios; and he had to find places for them, and even to construct rooms to do them justice. Then stone-cutters from Darnick, the village, worked so cheaply that it was almost an economy to put in extra pieces of decoration.

"It is worth while to come," he wrote, urging an invitation on Lord Montagu, "were it but to see what a romance of a house



I am making, which is neither to be castle nor abbey (God forbid!) but an old Scottish manor house. I believe Atkinson is in despair with my whims, for he cries out *yes—yes—yes*, in a tone which exactly signifies *no—no—no*, by no manner of means."

His correspondence with Lord Montagu was constant, and it all arose out of his concern for the education of his "young Chief," Lord Montagu's ward, the Duke of Buccleuch. That was in part expression of his love for the family, and for the boy himself, whom the poet had watched growing, since the lad was the model for bold Buccleuch's heir in the *Lay*; but also in part it sprang from his care for the whole countryside, of which the boy at Eton must one day be master. He would have desired to see him so bred up that one day the new lord should write, as Scott himself wrote to a friend of his youth (sometime Miss Crans-toun, but then the widowed Countess Purgstall living in a Styrian castle):

"I dwell among my own people, and have many whose happiness is dependent on me, which I study to the best of my power."

It was part of his study never to give anything as alms if he could help it; firewood, for instance, was always on sale at a cheap rate, and the proceeds went towards paying a doctor to be available. In one of his letters also he rages in good set phrase against such persons as push into the houses of the poor and tell them how they should cook their dinners. His charity respected the independence of those who were in some degree dependent on him, and he was far remote from those proprietors who enforce the utmost of their rights. Captain Basil Hall, in a journal of his stay at Abbotsford, tells how in walking with Scott through the woods they came to a finger-post marked "Rod to Selkirk." The spelling was Tom Purdie's, but it was Scott's order that the notice should be there, in the very centre of his grounds. The public road was not far off, but, he told Hall:—

"I never could bring myself to make that a reason for excluding any person who finds it agreeable or advantageous to

take over the hill if he likes. Nothing on earth would induce me to put up boards threatening prosecution, or cautioning one's fellow-creatures to beware of mantraps and spring-guns. I hold that all such things are not only in the highest degree offensive and hurtful to the feelings of people whom it is every way important to conciliate, but that they are also quite inefficient—and I will venture to say, that not one of my young trees has ever been cut, nor a fence trodden down, or any kind of damage done, in consequence of the free access which all the world has to my place. Round the house, of course, there is a set of walks set apart and kept private for the ladies—but over all the rest of my land any one may rove as he likes. I please myself with the reflection that many people of taste may be indulging their fancies in these grounds, and I often recollect how much of Burns's inspiration was probably due to his having near him the woods of Ballochmyle to ramble through at his will when he was a ragged callant."

That should be remembered when Scott is called to account for the prodigality with which he ministered to his own delight. The delight had no selfishness. Here is Captain Hall's version of a spoken rhapsody, which Sir Walter uttered to him:

"I look back to the time when there was not a tree here, only bare heath; I look round and see thousands of trees growing up, all of which, I may say almost each of which, have received my personal attention. I remember five years ago looking forward, with the most delighted expectation, to this very hour, and as each year has passed, the expectation has gone on increasing. I do the same now; I anticipate what this plantation will be, and that one will presently be, if only taken care of, and there is not a spot of which I do not watch the progress. Unlike building, or even painting, or indeed any other kind of pursuit, this has no end, and is never interrupted, but goes on from day to day, and from year to year, with a perpetually augmenting interest. Farming I hate; what have I to do with fattening and killing beasts, or raising corn only to cut it down, and to wrangle with farmers about prices, and to be constantly at the mercy of the seasons? There can be no such disappointments or annoyances in planting trees."

Set beside that this letter to Southey, written in 1824:

"The years which have gone by have found me dallying with the time, and you improving it as usual,—I tossing my

ball and driving my hoop, a grey-headed schoolboy—and you plying your task unremittingly for the instruction of our own and future ages. Yet I have not been wholly idle or useless—witness five hundred acres of moor and moss, now converted into hopeful woodland of various sizes, to the great refreshment, even already, of the eyes of the pilgrims who still journey to Melrose.”

There was never a man more in love with the corner of earth where he had his dwelling; and he spent on it, recklessly, as a lover spends on his mistress. But it was not only the face of the earth, and the buildings by which he sought to adorn it. He “dwelt among his own people.” They were part of his countryside, and he saw to it that they should be sharers in his pleasures. John o’ Skye, the piper, was one of his contributions to the amenities, for the piper went abroad through the village. But there were recurring festivities: the kirk or harvest-home in November; Hogmanay at the New Year with its guisards (or maskers); but above all on October 28th, young Walter’s birthday, there was the Abbotsford hunt, when gentry and yeomen farmers attended for a great coursing match on the hills behind Sir Walter’s upper marches, and ‘as many hares would be killed as kept the farmers’ wives in soup for a week after. The day ended with a dinner at Abbotsford, of thirty or forty guests, with fare suitable to all the Dandie Dinmonts. Geese, turkeys and sheep’shead and the inevitable haggis were only side dishes; ale during dinner, and after it bowls of punch, with the Ettrick shepherd for its most experienced manufacturer. Then every man that had a song to sing sang it, and Scott held his place in the scene, until it was time for the muster to make their ways home, on their mountain ponies—with a stirrup-cup to speed them. Lockhart tells that one good wife cast up to Sir Walter, the next time he passed her way, her husband’s first words on returning:

“Ailie, my lass, I’m ready for my bed, and I wish I could sleep for a towmont, for there’s only ae thing in this world worth living for, and that’s the Abbotsford hunt!”

Captain Hall records festivity of another kind in February 1825; it was a dance in honour of the young Walter, just back with flying colours from Sandhurst—which was then, what Camberley is now, a school for the special training of picked officers. There was a great clan gathering—nine Scotts of Harden, ten of other branches; and at least half a dozen Fergussons, with “the jolly Sir Adam,” Scott’s contemporary and comrade, who had been knighted on the King’s visit to Edinburgh. There came also Fergusson’s niece Miss Jobson, “the pretty heiress of Lochore.” This was the first time that all the apartments of Scott’s “romance of a house” were thrown open to receive company; and the occasion, though Hall did not know it, was to celebrate a treaty of marriage between the heir of Abbotsford and the heiress of Lochore.

This was, we can well believe Lockhart, “one of the proudest and happiest evenings in Scott’s brilliant existence.” He adored this tall son, though one has to look for proof of that rather to his mentions of Walter to Joanna Baillie and suchlike old friends than to the letters to the subaltern himself. A good many of these are much in the vein of Colonel Mannering; if the young man neglects to write home, there is sharp reproof; and there is insistence on his using the introductions provided, so that he may not treat the mess as “all sufficient to itself.” “Every distinguished soldier I have known, and I have known many, was a man of the world and accustomed to general society.” The tone becomes graver in 1821, when there was some trouble about discipline in the 18th Hussars, and Cornet Walter Scott thought that Sir David Baird, who commanded in chief in Ireland, had been unjust to the regiment. His father came down upon him heavily, and was specially unlenient to the excuse that the punished officer had offended in his cups.—In short, according to modern ideas of parental authority, Scott would seem a stern father; but most of these jobations were accompanied by an extra remittance. There are growls also about the cost of equipment; but nothing can conceal the pride and joy which the father felt in the tall, handsome and most stylish

young officer whom Sir Thomas Lawrence painted for him on the great canvas that still hangs at Abbotsford. And when there arose question of marriage with the niece of Scott's near neighbour and ally, and Miss Jobson's parents insisted that Abbotsford should be settled on the couple, the creator of Abbotsford signed away his acquisitions without a moment's hesitation, saying that he had more pleasure in parting with his lands than ever he got from acquiring them or owning them.

He added: "If I be spared for ten years, I think I may promise to settle as much again more on these young folks."

Yet this was at the close of a period in which his fertility of invention had been worked to the uttermost; and even he himself had begun to see that his energies should take a new direction. However, that did not lessen his confidence; and in a sense he was right. •

It is time to review the work crowded into the years since his all but mortal illness of 1819-20.

After *Ivanhoe*, there came (in the same year, 1820) *The Monastery*, a story centring round his beloved Melrose. This was nevertheless his first admitted failure. "That did not trouble him. "If it wasna weel bobbit, we'll bob it again," he wrote to Ballantyne, and he gave his story a sequel in *The Abbot*.

In the Introduction to this, written for the collected edition ten years later, Scott has some observations on the reasons which encouraged him. ~~He was, he said, the~~ more indifferent to *The Monastery's* failure because: "I did not put so high a value as many others upon what is termed reputation in the abstract, or at least upon the species of popularity which had fallen to my share; for . . . I was far from thinking that the novelist or romance writer stands high in the works of literature." Next, he questioned the verdict. All prolific and successful writers were liable to find each successive work classed as inferior to its predecessors, because of the high expectations which had been formed in consequence of former favours; yet Voltaire's latest Essays were finally rated among his best.

And further, he added: "The author's incognito gave him the greater courage to renew his attempts to please the public."

At the same time, the persistent man was not too proud to take advice. In *The Monastery* he had gone back to the use of that supernatural machinery towards which his early predilection for German tales inclined him; and he found that the public had learnt from himself to expect that a tale should be reasonably credible to a plain man. So in the sequel, although the family of Avenel were still on the stage, the White Lady of Avenel vanished and took no further part in the action.

No one would particularly care for *The Abbot* were it not for the study of Mary, Queen of Scots. The immortal beauty is slightly drawn; but I may quote an opinion about this presentment of her. After Maurice Hewlett had written his *Queen's Quair*, I asked him if he had read *The Abbot* before writing it. "No," he said. "but since." "And what did you think?" "I thought," he said, "that Scott was a great swell." Hewlett knew more of the Renaissance world than perhaps even Scott; but I think he realised that Scott gave a better picture of Scotland in the sixteenth century—and of Scotland's queen—than he, for all his talent and his labour, had attained to.

There was a natural cry for the companion portrait, and *Kenilworth* followed *The Abbot* in 1821. Queen Elizabeth also is approached with gloves on; but I do not know any other study of her that makes one so ready to believe that she could charm, subjugate, and terrify. Amy Robsart, too, is a moving presentment; and the whole of the feasting at Kenilworth may rank among Scott's finest *tours de force*. Indeed, the book ranks among his best, or, if one is to discriminate further, among those which, though excellent, are still inferior in reality and depth to the first creations of his lusty invention. The whole intricate structure is admirably contrived: for instance, it seems at first a straining of coincidence that Tressilian, Amy Robsart's rejected lover, should find Amy in his room at Leicester's mansion; yet the explanation when it comes is perfectly natural.

Tressilian is Henry Morton over again; he is the shadow-side of Scott. And surely, there is significance for a biographer in this passage about him, which is abruptly and even inartistically introduced.

"Nothing is perhaps more dangerous to the future happiness of men of deep thought and retired habits than the entertaining of a long, early and unfortunate attachment. It frequently sinks so deep into the mind that it becomes their dream by night and their vision by day—mixes itself in every source of interest and enjoyment, and when blighted and withered, it seems as if the springs of the heart were dried up along with it. This aching of the heart, this languishing after a shadow which has lost all the gaiety of its colouring, this dwelling on the remembrance of a dream from which we have been long roughly awakened, is the weakness of a generous heart, and it was that of Tressilian."

Again, in this study of Elizabethan England, Scott did not forget to inset his special votive offering. Sussex, the hardy soldier, has been speaking in the Queen's presence against plays and playwrights and commending the old English sport of the bear-garden. He is reproved and answers:

"By my faith I wish Will Shakespeare no harm. He is a stout man at quarterstaff and single falchion, though as I am told a halting fellow; and he stood, they say, a tough fight with the rangers of old Sir Thomas Lacy of Charlecot when he robbed his deerpark and kissed his keeper's daughter."

It will be seen that the modern Boltfoot seized upon any hint that could give him the faintest similitude with the chief of all his literary heroes. Scott probably valued himself on nothing more than that he once in student days fought three assailants for an hour with his oaken cudgel. But Sussex has more to say:

"Some of his whoreson poetry, I crave your Grace's pardon for such a phrase, hath rung in my ears as if the lines sounded to boot and saddle. But then it is all froth and folly,—no substance and seriousness in it, as your Grace hath touched."

And so the last word goes to the great Queen herself :

"There is that in his plays that is worth twenty bear-gardens, and this new undertaking of his Chronicles, as he calls them, may entertain with honest mirth, mingled with useful instruction, not only our subjects but the generation which may succeed to us."

That is perhaps the nearest that Sir Walter ever came to a defence of his own works—for it will be clear that "the Author of *Waverley*" lurks here behind Shakespeare's buckler.

About the same time as *Kenilworth*, there appeared a publication which has importance in the history of Scott's fortunes. This was a series of "Letters to Mr. Richard Heber," then member for Oxford University, in which the writer, Mr. J. L. Adolphus, entered into a critical examination of the *Waverley Novels* to prove that the "Author of *Waverley*" could be none other than Scott. There is no need now to go into the ingenious argument, which was at every point flattering to the known poet and the officially unknown novelist ; but it serves to remind us that although the mask was of the thinnest, Scott resented any attempt to force him to remove it. Indeed, if strangers wrote imputing the authorship to him, he did not hesitate on occasion to deny it. But it was impossible for him to charge Mr. Adolphus with impertinence, and upon the next occasion that offered—in the Introduction to *The Fortunes of Nigel*—the Author of *Waverley* alluded to the "Letters," and praised their "wit, genius and delicacy . . . which I heartily wish to see engaged on a subject of more importance." He went on to say that the evidence "which seemed at first irrefragable" to prove that Francis wrote the "Letters of Junius" had none the less failed to convince.

"But on this subject," he continued, "I will not be soothed or provoked into saying one word more. To say who I am not, would be one step towards saying who I am."

Two years later, when Mr. Adolphus came to Abbotsford there was still "a strict reserve" on the subject ; but it created no embarrassment. "I never saw a man who in his intercourse with all persons was so perfect a master of



courtesy," says this admirable writer and observer, whose impressions are reproduced at length in Lockhart. Like so many others, he described Scott's amazing profusion of anecdote, and his gift for dramatising a scene in the telling of it. One passage, however, must be borrowed for its picture of the man at this period and above all for the description of his laugh.

"No one who has seen him can forget the surprising power of change which his countenance showed when awakened from a state of composure. In 1823, when I first knew him, the hair upon his forehead was quite grey, but his face, which was healthy and sanguine, and the hair about it which had still a strong reddish tinge, contrasted rather than harmonized with the sleek, silvery locks above; a contrast which might seem rather suited to a jovial and humorous, than to a pathetic expression. But his features were equally capable of both. The form and hue of his eyes (for the benefit of minute physiognomists it should be noted that the iris contained some small specks of brown) were wonderfully calculated for showing great varieties of emotion. Their mournful aspect was extremely earnest and affecting; and, when he told some dismal and mysterious story, they had a doubtful, melancholy, exploring look, which appealed irresistibly to the hearer's imagination. Occasionally, when he spoke of something very audacious or eccentric, they would dilate and light up with a tragic-comic, harebrained expression, quite peculiar to himself; one might see in it a whole chapter of *Cœur-de-lion* and the Clerk of Copmanhurst. Never, perhaps, did a man go through all the gradations of laughter with such complete enjoyment, and a countenance so radiant. The first dawn of a humorous thought would show itself sometimes, as he sat silent, by an involuntary lengthening of the upper lip, followed by a shy sidelong glance at his neighbours, indescribably whimsical, and seeming to ask from their looks whether the spark of drollery should be suppressed or allowed to blaze out. In the full tide of mirth he did indeed 'laugh the heart's laugh,' like Walpole, but it was not boisterous and overpowering, nor did it check the course of his words; he could go on telling or descanting, while his lungs did 'crow like chanticler,' his syllables, in the struggle, growing more emphatic, his accent more strongly Scotch, and his voice plaintive with excess or merriment."

It is amazing that we know nothing else of a gentleman who could write like Mr. Adolphus; but the charm and

interest of Scott's personality is proved in half a score of cases by the exceptional merit of what those who met him wrote about him.

*The Fortunes of Nigel* carries on the series of historical portraits by which Sir Walter has illustrated English history; and though some good judges have slighted this novel, I confess to delighting in it, above all for the sake of the surprising monarch who united the thrones of England and Scotland. Scott did not spare James I; he makes him ridiculous, and not least ridiculous by cowardice; yet somehow he contrives to impart his own personal liking for the king who loved learning and who had a kind heart. Also, one feels that in *Kenilworth* Scott is by an effort constructing out of his imagination a picture of Elizabethan England; but in *Nigel* the environment seems present to him almost as if it were Scotland of a hundred and fifty years later; he knows Fleet Street and Alsatia as if they were the Canongate and the sanctuary of Holyrood. His reading in the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, and in all the pamphlets and memoirs with which the seventeenth century teemed from the first, had created in him a familiarity with that age such as few men can ever have possessed. And, moreover, in *Nigel* he was for the most part dealing with Scotchmen.

*Nigel* came out in May 1822, and we have Constable's letter telling how the smack from Edinburgh carrying the first impression reached its wharf in the Thames on Sunday; the bales were got out as if they were some costly perishable merchandise, and by half-past ten on Monday morning 7,000 copies had been despatched from the office of Hurst and Robinson—Constable's London agents.

By this time Scott had contracted to furnish four more "works of fiction," and had received bills in payment for them. This was frenzied dealing; but in truth he and Constable had both lost their heads. Scott felt as if he controlled an inexhaustible supply for which there was inexhaustible demand, and although we may be sure that Constable never wished to trade on these lines, yet

Constable was ready to agree to anything rather than let this author find another publisher.

The results have to be considered later, in so far as they affected the fortunes of Scott and of Constable; but in one sense Scott was amply justified of his confidence, for within two years he had completed the four books, and two of them are among his best.

Yet the first was and remains a failure. After *Nigel* came out, Scott turned to '*Peveril of the Peak*. The law term was nearly over, and Abbotsford was the best place for his work. Constable's partner, Cadell, came down to see him there, and found him to all appearance ceaselessly engaged with his workpeople on the place, and asked when he got time to think.

"'O,' said Scott, 'I lie *simmering* over things for an hour or so before I get up—and there's the time I am dressing to overhaul my half-sleeping, half-waking *projet de chapitre*—and when I get the paper before me, it commonly runs off pretty easily. Besides, I often take a doze in the plantations, and while Tom marks out a dyke or a drain as I have directed, one's fancy may be running its ain riggs in some other world'."

But in 1822 George IV's visit had to be prepared for and seen through, and July and August were largely wasted on that—and though, no doubt, Scott somehow contrived to carry on his writing, the strain was multiplied; and the shock of Erskine's death made matters worse. He was ill, and wrote to Terry in London complaining of "a ~~whoreson~~ thickness of blood and a depression of spirits arising from the loss of friends . . . *Peveril* will, I fear, smell of the apoplexy."

Lockhart infers that Sir Walter had already experienced, and concealed, some forerunner of the seizures which were to end him. Whatever be the reason, *Peveril* is a sad falling away, and Charles II by far the least successful in this series of crowned heads.—The truth is that mere licentiousness set Scott against a man as not even James I's physical timidity could do.

It is worth noting that this royalist avoided a subject which should bring Charles I on the scene. In *Nigel* he is

present as the young Prince—a figure more full of dignity than of graciousness. We see him in *Woodstock* through the eyes of Cromwell, when a chance brings the victim's portrait before the victor's eye; and the passage has moving eloquence. But I cannot resist a feeling that Scott, in presenting a study of Charles I's reign, would have felt constrained by his sense of history to pass judgment more unfriendly than would have seemed to him becoming; there was a protecting halo where the axe had fallen.

The only figure that stands out surpassingly in *Peveril* makes a brief but formidable appearance—the bravo, assassin and robber, Colonel Blood.

The same letter to Terry which expressed doubts of *Peveril*, added:

"I propose a good rally, however, and hope it will be a powerful effect. My idea is, *entre nous*, a Scotch archer in the French king's guard, *tempore* Louis XI, the most picturesque of all times."

Lockhart thinks that *Quentin Durward* did more than any other of the novels to extend Scott's fame on the Continent; and the "good rally" had much to say in the launching of Alexandre Dumas. Without Scott's example, Dumas would have been something different—and the world would be a duller place.

But from our point of view to-day, I should say, first, that *Quentin Durward*, like *Ivanhoe*, is one of the novels which the very young can enjoy to the full; and that for reading in later life it wears better than *Ivanhoe*. There is not, perhaps, the same verve and rush of narrative; but there is more solidity. Philippe de Commines is a modern writer compared with any of the sources on which Scott had to rely for his picture of Cœur de Lion and England in Cœur de Lion's time. This historian was also a politician, and the counsellor of the monarch who virtually struck the death-blow to feudalism and paved the way for a strongly organised central monarchy. Scott is vividly interested to recapture the workings of Louis XI's mind, and follow

out his plans—and to show at the same time how imperfectly emancipated from superstition was this advanced thinker in politics.

After this success with a story reviving events five hundred years old, that passed in a country on which he had scarcely set his eyes, the Author of *Waverley* attempted a novel of contemporary life, the scene of which was laid at his own door. For in *St. Ronan's Well* the scenery described is that of Innerleithen, near Walkerburn, a few miles above Abbotsford on the Tweed. This time, the failure was not relative but positive. Of course there are good things in *St. Ronan's Well*; Meg Dodds, the traditional old-fashioned Scots landlady, is something more than merely a good character-part; she brings the breath of life with her whenever she appears. And in the very last pages the account of the fatal duel is masterly. But on the whole we may agree with Lady Louisa Stuart when she said that Sir Walter seemed to be trying how unlike himself he could be in a book. He had attempted that for which he had no gift—a satiric study of the lives of idle gentlefolk, mixed with a melodramatic tale of deceit and spurious marriage. He never lived with the idle. Gossip of the Outer House and the Courts amused him, it lay on the fringes of his work; anything that had to do with violent adventure attracted him, and so did all the lives of breadwinning labourers, or of those who must starve or live by the charity which their wits teach them to stimulate. Apart from these classes, the concern of his imagination was only with the movers, chief and subaltern, in great events.

From such ingredients he made out *Redgauntlet*, the tale which followed *St. Ronan's Well*; and here again and again we find Scott at his very best. Many will be inclined to think that the legal humours of the opening are tedious. But, as has been already noted, for a student of Scott's life none of all the novels has more value than this, since Mr. Saunders Fairfax is undoubtedly drawn from Scott's father, and Alan Fairfax and Darsie Latimer are Scott and William Clerk.—It hurts the book again that Scott recurs to the

method of epistolary narration, in which he never did his best work. Yet inset in one of the letters is "Wandering Willie's Tale," which Stevenson accounted the best short story in the language. It is, at all events, incomparably the best example of Scott's prose fiction in short compass; yet seldom in Scott does prose lie so close to poetry as in this story, which is put into the mouth of a blind fiddler. Treading on the border-line of the supernatural, yet always with one foot at least solidly planted on earth, the artist here creates images for laughter, for terror and for romantic beauty (as in the picture of Claverhouse among the dead and dreaded persecutors of the unconforming hill folk), yet rounds off his invention with a humorous close. "Wandering Willie's Tale" affords a convenient test. Whoever can read that without enjoyment will never care for Scott; we may be very sorry for such persons, but their case is incurable.

This inset gem stands by itself, unique in the whole series of novels, but there is plenty more of the first quality in *Redgauntlet*. Nanty Ewart, the smuggling captain, once a scholar, and still almost a gentleman, as well as a fine seaman and bold fighter, is sketched with Scott's most sympathetic touch; yet judgment is passed: he has too much liking and respect for Nanty not to make an end of him. Then there is the prodigious figure of Poor Peter Peebles, dashed in with the force of Dickens, but without a touch of Dickens' sentimentality. But then Scott was a lawyer by profession, and, if he did not love the law, had a kindness for it; and his satire on the law's delays is balanced by a perception that the thwarted litigant is not always a martyred innocent.

Still Scott is not at his very best when the picture has so strong an element of caricature. He is at his very best in the study of Joshua Geddes, the Quaker, and his sister. These people make an effective contrast to the furious violence of the elder Redgauntlet, Herries of Birrenswark; but the picture needs no such foil, and it should be remembered by those who think Scott was a sort of literary swash-buckler. He certainly loved a fighting man; but in all his work nothing conveys the admiring love of courage so well

as the scene in which Joshua Geddes goes out from his peaceful house to meet the violent men who are coming to smash up the whole machinery of the enterprise which he is directing. The Quaker will allow no appeal to force; he sends away the stouthearted man, and stouthearted dog, who stood to make a fight of it when the rest of their mates ran; but neither will he allow his gear to be sacked and broken without confronting the raiders, that he may reason, and warn, and declare his intention to seek redress by law. Everything in that scene is superb; the whole scenery on the dangerous shores of the Solway, the very feel of the weather, night charged with menace—all is there, and all has been led up to by chapters only less good.<sup>1</sup>

There is one more topic of praise. In *Waverley* Scott drew directly from the insurrection of 1745, and in a sense Charles Edward was the book's central figure. In *Redgauntlet* he made an imaginary tale, connected with one of the repeated and successive Jacobite plots, in which the Chevalier sought to renew the hazard. We see the young prince of *Waverley* in his middle age, and his faults are not spared; but his personal dignity and charm are conveyed. We see the promoters of an abortive rising drawn together; and with the utmost skill Scott depicts the whole atmosphere, the hesitations, the desperations, culminating in the moment when all is lost, the attempt abandoned, yet every man's safety is compromised. Then while the conspirators are assembled, suddenly into their midst walks a man of their own order and kindred, a Campbell, but one who is an officer of the Hanoverian Government. Here again is a picture of courage, entirely different from the Quaker's, yet again the courage of an unarmed man. Nobody that ever wrote could better that scene; and nobody who reads it can fail to grasp what Scott's purpose is to convey—that in civil war the last and decisive weapon is clemency. A few lines

<sup>1</sup> I do not like footnotes, but this remark is only addressed to a limited class of my possible readers. Salmon fishers should be glad to remember that Sir Walter takes occasion to convey his impression that the rioters had probably strong justification for their resentment, and that the setting of the stakenets which Mr. Geddes managed was an invasion of public right, which threatened to destroy the livelihood of the fishermen, and also to deplete dangerously the supply of fish.

may be quoted: it will be remembered that Charles Edward is present, in known though not avowed disguise.

"‘Is this real?’ said Redgauntlet. ‘Can you mean this?’ Am I—are all, are any of these gentlemen at liberty, without interruption, to embark in yonder tug, which I see is now again approaching the shore?’

‘You, sir—all—any of the gentlemen present,’ said the General, ‘all whom the vessel can contain are, at liberty to embark uninterrupted by me; but I advise none to go off who have not powerful reason, unconnected with the present meeting, for this will be remembered against no one.’

‘Then, gentlemen,’ said Redgauntlet, clasping his hands together as the words burst from him, ‘the cause is lost for ever’.

It did not lessen the artist’s pleasure in framing this scene, that “Black Colin Campbell,” who played this decisive part so generously, came of the only Highland clan to which Scott had affinity. And it is certain that his study of the Quakers was affected by memory of his own progenitor, Walter Scott, first laird of Raeburn and father of the Jacobite “Beardie.” This Walter was the child of a strange marriage. The heir to Scott of Harden, foraying upon the lands of his neighbour, Sir Gideon Murray of Elibank, had the misfortune to be intercepted, overpowered and brought in shackles to Elibank castle—where Sir Gideon was for hanging him. But Sir Gideon’s wife said they had three unmarried daughters, one of whom was so plain that she went by the name of Meiklemouthed Meg. Young Harden had his choice of her or the rope, and he signed the marriage contract then and there on the drumhead. The third son of this Harden and his Meg was Walter, who turned away from his Jacobite traditions, became a Whig and finally a Quaker—and at the suit of his own relations and his wife’s, was thrown into jail, and debarred access to his wife and children. He suffered for conscience’ sake; and the later Walter, though he loved a Cavalier and loved a fighting man, yet had a tenderness for Quakers.

After *Redgauntlet* Scott wrote no novel that added to his fame. The spring was at last running dry. Yet a



new venture was suggested, in hopes of striking a new vein, and he undertook his *Tales of the Crusaders*. The first of these was *The Betrothed*, which pleased nobody. Its only value is in an illustration of history—especially in the study of Flemish settlers among the Welsh, much the best pictures in the book. Scott tried to make play with the Welsh as he had done with the Highlanders—and obviously the bard Cadwallader was intended for a more important part; but the plan shifted, so that this figure is fitful, only a medium for some almost first-rate verse, until he is finally brought in to dispose of Randal Lacy by a vivid piece of killing. But the book has no real background of knowledge, passed into the subconscious image-building self; Scott here has nothing to go on but the old love of chivalry and its appurtenances which had been his since childhood.

Yet this unsuccessful book was carried off by its yoke-fellow, *The Talisman*, where Scott's imagination again took fire at the names of Cœur de Lion and Saladin. This story is not real creation; but it is make-believe carried out with an energy that checks criticism. Nobody but Scott himself could have done it.

From the time when he began these romances in 1825 he knew that his invention was wearing out; yet that seemed no ground for despair. Constable came to him with a proposal, worthy of commemoration, for issuing good books cheap, so that even the working men could buy them; profits were to be in halfpennies instead of in half-sovereigns, bringing larger returns at the end. Scott approved, and agreed to do his part; but not by writing fiction. History had never been written for popular reading, and this was what he proposed to turn to. And so, when the *Tales of the Crusaders* came out, there was Prefixed to them a Preface recounting a meeting of "the gentlemen and others interested in the celebrated publications called the Waverley Novels." Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck was secretary, and there was a son of Dandie Dinmont present, as well as Dr. Dryasdust and Captain Clutterbuck; and they came to words, and from words to blows, till the Presiding Person stopped the tumult.

"I am tired of you," he said . . . "I will discard you. I will lay my foundations better than on quicksand." . . . I intend to write the most wonderful book in which every incident shall be incredible yet strictly true . . . Such shall be the *LIFE OF NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE* by the *AUTHOR OF WAVERLEY*."

Manifestly this marks a turning-point. Scott, by his own judgment, was done with the literature of invention. Poetry, except for the occasional lyrics in his novels, he had struck out of his reckoning even earlier. In 1822, Joanna Baillie, for whom he had an old and strong affection, asked contributions to a Miscellany which she was to compile and publish for the benefit of a friend in distress. He wrote back that he had "not a single scrap of unpublished verse" and did not feel it easy to write more.

"I do not know what should make it rather a melancholy task for me now-a-days to sit down and versify—I did not use to think it so—but I have ceased, I know not why, to find pleasure in it, and yet I do not think I have lost any of the faculties I ever possessed for the task; but I was never fond of my own poetry, and am now much out of conceit with it. All this another person less candid in construction than yourself would interpret into a hint to send a good dose of praise—but you know we have agreed long ago to be above ordinances, like Cromwell's saints. When I go to the country upon the 12th of March, I will try what the watersides can do for me, for there is no inspiration in causeways and kennels, or even the Court of Session."

However, he was no way disposed to refuse; and before the long letter was finished he had sketched for her in vivid prose the story of an incident at the battle of Halidon Hill, in which a Swinton, one of his mother's forbears, played the leading part.

This grew into the dramatic sketch of "Halidon Hill," which was too long for Joanna's purpose; he wrote her instead the shorter blank verse sketch "Macduff's Cross." Since Lockhart says that both would have been long forgotten had they come from another pen, we may leave it at that,—simply noting that Constable paid £1,000 for the

✓ copyright of "Halidon Hill" and clamoured for more in the same kind. There is no denying Scott was tempted by this suggestion, and by whatever promised more money.

One source of outlay was closed—or supposed to be. "About July," Scott wrote to Terry in February 1824, "Abbotsford will I think be finished, when I shall, like the old Duke of Queensberry who built Drunlanrig, fold up the accounts in a sealed parcel, bidding the deil pike out the een of any of my successors that shall open it."

But there was no lack of other channels. Terry, for instance, was in difficulties with his theatre, and Scott guaranteed him an advance of £1,250—with a deal of sound advice as to the future. This, however, was a trifle. Sir Walter had the land hunger on him; the appetite grew by what it fed on; and he wrote to his eldest son, consulting him about a projected acquisition of another adjoining estate—for £40,000.

He was more than ever in love with the idea of founding a property that should rank among the notable estates of Tweedside, now that his heir had married in such a way as to forward the project. And he was very much in love with his daughter-in-law. The letters that he wrote to her, after her marriage, are full of the most touching endearments. With his own children, even with Sophia, nearest of all to his heart, he used few caressing words; but he wanted to make "my dearest Jane" feel from the first that she was more than welcome in the home circle. And when the Courts rose in summer, he tied him, as had been arranged before, to visit the young couple in Ireland, where Walter Scott was with his regiment—the 15th Hussars, to which he had been transferred from the 18th.

His travelling companions were his daughter Anne and Lockhart; and in July 1825, Sir Walter was the guest of his son and daughter-in-law at a house which had originally been Lord Cloncurry's, but had sunk to be garrison lodgings, before it was rehabilitated, in Dan O'Connell's heyday, and became, what it now is—the Stephen's Green Club. "Never can I forget," says Lockhart, "the fond joy

and pride with which Sir Walter looked round him as he sat for the first time at his son's table."

Moreover, all Dublin turned out to fête the great Magician. Whoever was most distinguished in the city came to call upon him; and in the streets people lined up for his passage as if he had been a conqueror. It was a new evidence of what he himself called once "his friendly fame."

But the special purpose of his journey, over and above seeing his own young ones, was to return a visit to one Irish friend. It has been told how *Waverley* was read at Edgeworthstown. The compliments which followed were exchanged through Ballantyne, and not till 1822 did a personal acquaintance come into view—through Joanna Baillie's introduction. A visit to Edinburgh was then projected, but only took place in 1823. Maria Edgeworth had scarcely set foot in the city before there was a note from Sir Walter, saying he would call next day at twelve (as she was engaged to dinner elsewhere and he could not come to meet her); but a postscript added that the Laird of Staffa was coming to them that very evening with one of his clansmen who would sing Highland boatsongs, and proposed that, if she were not too tired, she and her two half-sisters should come "as the Irish should to the Scotch, without any ceremony."

"Ten o'clock struck as I read the note," says Miss Edgeworth. "We were tired—we were not fit to be seen; but I thought it right to accept 'Walter Scott's' cordial invitation; sent for a hackney coach and, just as we were, without dressing, went."

And in five minutes they were holding handkerchiefs in a circle and stamping in unison to the Gaelic chorus.

But Miss Edgeworth is one of the capital authorities on Sir Walter, and readers must be referred to her letters. I note only that she also, like Adolphus, noted in her first expression the perfection of Scott's courtesy, "the exquisite politeness which is of no particular school or country, but which is of all countries, the politeness which arises from good and quick sense and feeling, which seems to know by instinct the characters of others, to see what will please, and put all his guests at their ease."

After an excursion on their own account to the Highlands—where the guides showed the places at which scenes passed in the poems or the novels exactly as if they were historical—the party came to Abbotsford for a fortnight. If we to-day have little kindness for Scott's "romance of a house," at least Miss Edgeworth's impression should not be forgotten. "Everything about you is exactly what one ought to have had wit enough to dream."

This visit had now to be returned, and accordingly Scott (with his own party, Captain Walter and the bride included, and another friend thrown in) went to Edgeworthstown for a week. Lockhart records some of the talk that passed between the two novelists when he was of the company. Scott said, by way of gentle reproof to some jest of Lockhart's, that he for his part had "heard higher sentiments from the lips of poor *uneducated* men and women . . . than ever outside of the pages of the Bible." "We shall never"—he was speaking of writers—"learn to feel and respect our real calling and destiny unless we have taught ourselves to consider everything as moonshine compared with the education of the heart."

Maria Edgeworth's comment to Lockhart was richly worth preserving:

"You see how it is. Dean Swift said he had written his books in order that people might learn to treat him like a great lord—Sir Walter writes his in order that he may be able to treat his people as a great lord ought to do."

This pleasant pilgrimage extended itself to the South of Ireland, and three Edgeworths accompanied the party. They saw Killarney, of course, and many other places; and they saw much misery. The agitation for Catholic emancipation was strongly on foot then; but Scott held that "the fault is in the landholder's extreme exactions, not in the disabilities of the Catholics or any more remote causes." And—in conversation with a veteran Highland officer—he expressed the opinion that "the destruction of the native aristocracy had robbed the Irish people of most of the internal elements of civilisation and that, had the

Highlanders been deprived of their own chiefs, they would have sunk from the natural poverty of their regions into a barbarity not exemplified even in the history of Ireland."

In both these views he saw clear; and in the latter he realised a cause which perhaps no Englishman would have guessed at.

The tour, which included a journey back through Wales and a couple of days spent in Wordsworth's company in the Lake Country, was over by September 1825. Yet when back at Abbotsford, Sir Walter was not wholly done with Ireland, for Moore, whom he had never happened to meet, proposed a visit. Scott's reply began:

"My dear Sir—Damn 'Sir'—My dear Moore."

The two men took more than kindly to each other, and when the host came into his guest's room on the morning after their first evening together (a family party which included the Fergussons and Laidlaw) Scott laid his hand on Moore's breast and said, "Now, my dear Moore, we are friends for life."

Meantime, the work on Napoleon went forward, and perhaps because it meant reading even more and writing rather less than usual, Scott conceived the idea, in November of this year, that he would begin a regular journal. What premonition may have prompted him, it is useless to conjecture; but owing to this resolve, we can look straight into his mind at the crisis of his fate.

Possibly, however, he was turned to introspection by one of those happenings which mark the decline of his vigorous manhood. Out coursing on the ground of his neighbour, Mr. Scott of Gala, the historic marchdyke of the kingdom of Strathclyde, called "the Catrail," lay across his line, and he put Sybil Grey at the leap; there was a fall, which bruised and shook him so that thereafter he never regained his nerve; and as Daisy had been discarded for Sybil Grey, so the cob in her turn was put aside for a still less ambitious mount.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE DOWNFALL

1825-26

SCOTT began his Journal on November 20th, 1825, in Edinburgh. The first two days are occupied with pleasant notes on his tour in Ireland, on Byron, on Moore, and on the people he met at dinner those days. But with the third entry comes a first staggering rumour of catastrophe. The failure of Constable's London agents was anticipated; this would bring down Constable, and must also painfully distress Ballantyne and his partner, Walter Scott.

It is no part of this book's purpose to apportion blame among those concerned in what was now swiftly coming to a head. There will no doubt be published in connection with the coming centenary a much fuller discussion than has yet been attempted. But certain broad facts are not in dispute. The firm of Ballantyne—in which Scott was a partner—had repeatedly raised money on Constable's credit; Constable had raised money on that of the Ballantynes. But in the same way there had been mutual backings of bills between Constable and his London agents Hurst and Robinson; so that if any one of the three firms was unable to meet its liabilities and could not procure further credit, the call fell back on the second and—if the second failed—on the first.

1825 was a year of wild speculation; bankers began to refuse accommodation. Constable was deeply dipped in his own proper business; Hurst and Robinson, according to Lockhart, not content with their own trade, had been

speculating in hops. Of their affairs Scott knew nothing, and he probably never guessed that Constable's solvency was involved with that of the London firm. He certainly never foresaw that Constable might possibly find himself in difficulties. But the plain truth is that his opinion on such matters was not worth much; for after the first hint of bad news he looked into his own position and concluded, "upon a fair balance which I have made," he was at least £40,000 to the good. This limitation to his general shrewdness has to be admitted.

He had no one to consult with, except James Ballantyne, whose head was useless in matters of finance, and Constable, who was equally incapable of exact accounting. Scott was more easily self-deceived because he had observed through life the habit of keeping minute account of small expenditure; but he never applied his mind to the effect of his repeated signatures to bills.

All this convicts him of imprudence; the more so because he had, as he says himself, a lesson in 1813, when the book-selling firm was almost driven into bankruptcy. There is, however, something more to be said. Scott virtually never touched a card or a dice box, but there was in him an element of the gambler. In the first chapter of *Rob Roy*, written about three years after the financial stress which was finally relieved by the success of *Waverley*, we meet with one of those reflective passages which have no real bearing on the progress of the story. Frank Osbaldistone is writing to his friend some of the relations between himself and his father, the successful London merchant, when suddenly this train of thought is introduced:

"In the fluctuations of mercantile speculation, there is something captivating to the adventurer, even independent of the hope of gain. He who embarks on that fickle sea requires to possess the skill of the pilot and the fortitude of the navigator, and after all, may be wrecked and lost, unless the gales of fortune breathe in his favour. This mixture of necessary attention and inevitable hazard,—the frequent and awful uncertainty whether prudence shall overcome fortune, or



fortune baffle the schemes of prudence, affords full occupation for the powers, as well as for the feelings of the mind, and trade has all the fascination of gambling without its moral guilt."

This fascination, allied to the dogged pride which hated to admit itself beaten, I believe, kept Scott in the concern during the years when he could easily have got out of it. There was also to hold him his extraordinary attachment to the Ballantynes—which was partly the result of habit, and which certainly had disastrous consequences on his relations with Constable.

An unsigned article in *Blackwood's Magazine* for February, 1926, brought against Scott very serious charges under this head. Part of these are, I think, quite unfounded. It is suggested that Scott, even before Ballantyne commenced printing, had the project of starting a book-selling and publishing business in Edinburgh; that he found himself anticipated by Constable; and that he launched the Ballantyne concerns in a spirit of vindictiveness. So far as the establishment of the printing concern is referred to, I see not the least justification for this view; Scott first desired to serve an old friend, and later saw a chance at the same time to invest part of his small capital in a way that would interest himself. The bookselling house is another matter; here politics came in. Scott was a strong Tory, and the prop of Constable's business was the *Edinburgh Review*; Scott wanted a Tory opposition to it. But once again, there was the motive of friendship. John Ballantyne, reduced from the status of employer to that of clerk, needed to be provided for; and one consideration helped on the other. I believe that both were much more potent with Scott than the desire to make money.

But he says frankly in one passage that when the literary success of his first poem seemed likely to lessen his chance of earning money at the bar, and further, when his clerkship for six years brought work only without pay, he looked to commerce as a serious resource for himself and his family—years before *Waverley* opened a new source of wealth.

Yet there is the truth that he quarrelled early in his career with Constable, or rather with Hunter, Constable's partner, and Blackwood's contributor has good grounds for saying that Scott was never fair to Constable. It was the easier for John Ballantyne, acting as Scott's literary agent, to push him into driving bargains again and again in which Constable took a very great risk, under the threat that Scott would look elsewhere for a publisher. The result was a thoroughly unsatisfactory footing, and Scott acquired the habit of drawing heavily against unwritten work. When the crash came, Constable owed him large sums for recently acquired copyrights; but Scott owed Constable literary work, as yet unwritten, to the value of about £10,000.

It is absurd to accuse him of being grasping in money matters; he allowed to John Ballantyne a third share in the proceeds of the *Waverley Novels*, which meant even affluence; no other literary agent has, I think, ever been rewarded on that scale. But in all his dealings with Constable, Scott was entirely inconsiderate of Constable's interest, and not very regardful of his feelings. Yet he knew, and said, that not himself only but the whole profession of letters was deeply in debt to this man, who, by his intelligence and liberality, had "broken up the monopoly of London booksellers," and had shown himself ready to pay very high rewards to the best talent.

On the other hand, it is impossible to exaggerate what Constable owed not merely in profit but in reputation to the fact that he was Scott's publisher. Also, he was fully aware that Scott was involved to the utmost in the Ballantyne firm, and that no man producing such an amount of literary work could give adequate attention to the business responsibilities of a printing house. Scott was unfair when he counted himself to have been deceived by Constable; yet it would have been no great excess of scruple if the business man, in dealings with a firm of printers which was financed by a great author, had attended carefully to see that this author knew how far he was committed.

The concern of this book, however, is merely to show what manner of man Scott was, and how he faced trouble; and there is only one way to do that—by a series of extracts from his Journal. A great part of this is given in Lockhart, but the entire text has been available since 1890. Extracts here are taken from Lockhart and they are simply chosen to tell the story. The Journal itself gives the full play of the man's mind from day to day over a wide range of subjects; it contains many of the best passages of Scott's writing, yet it was written with no view to being read, in his lifetime, even by one person; it differs in that from Swift's Journal to Stella, which in another way it resembles; for each is the most absolute and complete expression of the man. In the Journal, and only in the Journal, we find Scott speaking as he might have made a character in a novel speak, without the least thought of reticence. In his letters he never departs from the tone he would have used in general company; it has constantly the half-bantering vein which was habitual to him. But in the Journal he is speaking alone to his own heart; and for the full utterance readers must go to the volumes themselves.

Yet even in what is here borrowed, there must surely be felt the weight and force of a great personality—the large mould of a soul such as Shakespeare might have conceived.

The extracts shall be given with the least possible commentary beginning in 1825.

"November 22. Here is matter for a May morning, but much fitter for a November one. The general distress in the city has affected H. & R., Constable's great agents. Should they go, it is not likely that Constable can stand, and such an event would lead to great distress and perplexity on the part of J. B. and myself. Thank God, I have enough to pay more than 20s. in the pound, taking matters at the very worst. But much inconvenience must be the consequence. I had a lesson in 1814 which should have done good; but success and abundance erased it from my mind. But this is no time for journalizing, or moralizing either. Necessity is like a sour-faced cook-maid, and I a turn-spit she has flogged, ere now, till he mounted his

wheel.) If *Woodstock* can be out by 25th January it will do much, and it is possible. Could not write to purpose for thick-coming fancies.

"*November 25.* I here register my purpose to practise economics. I have little temptation to do otherwise. *Abbotsford* is all that I can make it, and too large for the property; so I resolve—

No more building;

No purchases of land, till times are quite safe;

No buying books or expensive trifles—I mean to any extent;

Clearing off encumbrances, with the returns of this year's labour;

Which resolutions, with health and my habits of industry, will make me 'sleep in spite of thunder'."

(But on *November 26th*, he mentions that he had been obliged to lend a widow lady £300 in order to help her to clear up her son's affairs.)

"*November 30.* I am come to the time when 'those that look out of the windows shall be darkened.' I must now wear spectacles constantly in reading and writing, though till this winter I have made a shift by using only their occasional assistance. Although my health cannot be better, I feel my lameness becomes sometimes painful, and often inconvenient. Walking on the pavement or causeway gives me trouble, and I am glad when I have accomplished my return on foot from the Parliament House to Castle Street, though I can (taking a competent time, as old *Braxie* said on another occasion) walk five or six miles in the country with pleasure. Well, such things must come, and be received with cheerful submission. My early lameness considered, it was impossible for a man to have been stronger or more active than I have been, and that for twenty or thirty years. Seams will split, and elbows will out, quoth the tailor; and as I was fifty-four, 15th August last, my mortal vestments are none of the newest. Then *Walter*, *Charles*, and *Lockhart*, are as active and handsome young fellows as you can see; and while they enjoy strength and activity, I can hardly be said to want it. I have perhaps all my life set an undue value on these gifts. Yet it does appear to me, that high and independent feelings are naturally, though not uniformly or inseparably, connected with bodily advantages. Strong men are usually good-humoured, and active men often display the same elasticity of mind as of body.—These superiorities, indeed, are often misused. But, even for these things, God shall call us to judgment."

Another change in his circumstances, painful yet not unhappy, impended. Lockhart was called to London to edit the *Quarterly Review*. Apart from other considerations, it was held that Hugh Littlejohn would have a better chance of health in the South.

"December 2. Rather a blank day for the *Gurnal*. Sophia dined with us alone, Lockhart being gone to the west to bid farewell to his father and brothers. Evening spent in talking with Sophia on their future prospects. God bless her, poor girl! she never gave me a moment's reason to complain of her. But, O my God! that poor delicate child, so clever, so animated, yet holding by this earth with so fearfully slight a tenure! Never out of his mother's thoughts, almost never out of his father's arms when he has but a single moment to give to anything. *Deus providebit*.

December 6. This morning Lockhart and Sophia left us early, and without leave-taking; when I arose at eight o'clock they were gone. This was very right. I hate red eyes and blowing of noses. *Agere et pati Romanum est*. Of all schools, commend me to the Stoics. We cannot indeed overcome our affections, nor ought we if we could, but we may repress them within due bounds, and avoid coaxing them to make fools of those who should be their masters. I have lost some of the comforts to which I chiefly looked for enjoyment. Well, I must make the more of such as remain—God bless them. And so 'I will unto my holy work again,' which at present is the description of that worshipful triunvirate, Danton, Robespierre, and Marat.

December 7. Dined quiet with Lady S—— and Anne. Anne is practising Scots songs, which I take as a kind compliment to my own taste, as hers lead her chiefly to foreign music. I think the good girl sees that I want and must miss her sister's peculiar talent in singing the airs of our native country, which, imperfect as my musical ear is, make, and always have made, the most pleasing impression on me. And so if she puts a constraint on herself for my sake, I can only say, in requital, God bless her.

I have much to comfort me in the present aspect of my family. My eldest son, independent in fortune, united to an affectionate wife—and of good hopes in his profession;—my second, with a good deal of talent, and in the way, I trust, of cultivating it to good purpose;—Anne, an honest downright good Scots lass, in whom I could only wish to correct a spirit of satire;—and Lockhart is Lockhart, to whom I can most willingly confide the happiness of the daughter who chose him,

and whom he has chosen. But my dear wife, the partner of early cares and successes is, I fear, frail in health—though I trust and pray she may see me out. Indeed, if this troublesome complaint goes on—it bodes no long existence. My brother was affected with the same weakness, which, before he was fifty, brought on mortal symptoms. The poor Major had been rather a free liver. But my father, the most abstemious of men, save when the duties of hospitality required him to be very moderately free with his bottle, and that was very seldom, had the same weakness of the powers of retention which now annoys me, and he, I think was not above seventy when cut off. Square the odds, and good-night Sir Walter, about sixty.—I care not, if I leave my name unstained, and my family properly settled—*Sat est vixisse.*

*December 14.* Affairs very bad again in the money-market in London. It must come here, and I have far too many engagements not to feel it. To end the matter at once, I intend to borrow £10,000, with which my son's marriage-contract allows me to charge my estate. This will enable us to dispense in a great measure with bank assistance, and sleep in spite of thunder. I do not know why it is—this business makes me a little bilious, or rather the want of exercise during the Session, and this late change of the weather to too much heat. But the sun and moon shall dance on the green ere carelessness or hope of gain, or facility of getting cash, shall make me go too deep again, were it but for the disquiet of the thing.

*December 15.* Dined at home with family. I am determined not to stand mine host to all Scotland and England as I have done. This shall be a saving, as it must be a borrowing, year. We heard from Sophia; they are got safe to town; but as Johnnie had a little bag of meal with him, to make his porridge on the road, the whole inn-yard assembled to see the operation. Junior, his maid, was of opinion that England was an 'awfu' coun'try to make parritch in.' God bless the poor baby, and restore his perfect health.

*December 18.* For myself, if things go badly in London, the magic wand of the Unknown will be shivered in his grasp. He must then, faith, be termed the Too-well-known. The feast of fancy will be over with the feeling of independence. He shall no longer have the delight of waking in the morning with bright ideas in his mind, hasten to commit them to paper, and count them monthly, as the means of planting such scurs, and purchasing such wastes; replacing dreams of fiction by other prospective visions of walks by

'Fountain heads, and pathless groves;  
Places which pale passion loves.'

This cannot be; but I may work substantial husbandry, *i.e.* write history, and such concerns. They will not be received with the same enthusiasm; at least I much doubt, the general knowledge that an author must write for his bread, at least for improving his pittance, degrades him and his productions in the public eye. He falls into the second-rate rank of estimation: ‘

‘ While the harness sore galls, and the spurs his side goad,  
The high-mettled racer’s a hack on the road.’

It is a bitter thought; but if tears start at it, let them flow. My heart clings to the place I have created—there is scarce a tree on it that does not owe its being to me.

What a life mine has been!—half educated, almost wholly neglected, or left to myself; stuffing my head with most nonsensical trash, and under-valued by most of my contemporaries for a time; getting forward, and held a bold and clever fellow, contrary to the opinion of all who thought me a mere dreamer; broken-hearted for two years; my heart handsomely pieced again—but the crack will remain till my dying day. Rich and poor four or five times; once on the verge of ruin, yet opened a new source of wealth almost overflowing. Now to be broken in my pitch of pride, and nearly winged (unless good news should come) because London chooses to be in an uproar, and in the tumult of bulls and bears, a poor inoffensive lion like myself is pushed to the wall. But what is to be the end of it? God knows; and so ends the catechism.

Nobody in the end can lose a penny by me—that is one comfort. Men will think pride has had a fall. Let them indulge their own pride in thinking that my fall will make them higher, or seem so at least. I have the satisfaction to recollect that my prosperity has been of advantage to many, and to hope that some at least will forgive my transient wealth on account of the innocence of my intentions, and my real wish to do good to the poor. Sad hearts, too, at Darnick, and in the cottages of Abbotsford. I have half resolved never to see the place again. How could I tread my hall with such a diminished crest?—how live a poor indebted man, where I was once the wealthy, the honoured? I was to have gone there on Saturday in joy and prosperity to receive my friends. My dogs will wait for me in vain. It is foolish—but the thoughts of parting from these dumb creatures has moved me more than any of the painful reflections I have put down. Poor things! I must get them kind masters! There may be yet those who, loving me, may love my dog, because it has been

mine. I must end these gloomy forebodings, or I shall lose the tone of mind with which men should meet distress. I find<sup>1</sup> my dogs' feet on my knees—I hear them whining and seeking me everywhere. This is nonsense, but it is what they would do could they know how things may be. An odd thought strikes me—When I die, will the journal of these days be taken out of the ebony cabinet at Abbotsford, and read with wonder, that the well-seeming Baronet should ever have experienced the risk of such a hitch?—or will it be found in some obscure lodging-house, where the decayed son of Chivalry had hung up his scutcheon, and where one or two old friends will look grave, and whisper to each other, 'Poor gentleman'—'a well-meaning man'—'nobody's enemy but his own'—'thought his parts would never wear out'—'family poorly left'—'pity he took that foolish title.' Who can answer this question?

Poor Will Laidlaw!—poor Tom Purdie!—such news will wring your hearts, and many a poor fellow's besides, to whom my prosperity was daily bread.

Ballantyne behaves like himself, and sinks the prospect of his own ruin in contemplating mine. I tried to enrich him indeed, and now all—all is in the balance. He will have the Journal still, that is a comfort, for sure they cannot find a better editor. *They*—alas, who will *they* be—the *unbekannten obern*<sup>2</sup> who may have to dispose of my all as they will? Some hard-eyed banker—some of these men of millions whom I described.

December 22. The air of *Bonnie Dundee* running in my head to-day, I wrote a few verses to it before dinner, taking the key-note from the story of Clavers leaving the Scottish Convention of Estates in 1688-9. I wonder if they are good. Ah, poor Will Erskine! thou couldst and wouldst have told me. I must consult J. B., who is as honest as was W. E. But then, though he has good taste, too, there is a little of *Big Bow-wow* about it. Can't say what made me take a frisk so uncommon of late years as to write verses of free-will. I suppose the same impulse which makes birds sing when the storm has blown over.

December 25. *Abbotsford*—Arrived here last night at seven. Our halls are silent compared to last year, but let us be thankful—*Barbarus has segetes?*—*Nullum numen abest, si sit prudentia*. There shall be no lack of wisdom. But come—*il faut cultiver notre jardin*. Let us see, I shall write out the Bonnets of *Bonnie Dundee*. I will sketch a preface to *La Rochejacquelin* for

<sup>1</sup> Lockhart prints it "I feel" but Scott took the Scotch way of saying it a curious proof how intimately his mind expressed itself in this idiom.

<sup>2</sup> Unknown rulers.



Constable's *Miscellany*, and try about a specimen of notes for the Waverley novels. Together with letters and by-business, it will be a good day's work.

‘I make a vow  
And keep it true.’

I will accept no invitation for dinner, save one to Newton-Don, and Mertoun to-morrow, instead of Christmas-Day. On this day of general devotion I have a particular call for gratitude!!

*December 26.* My God! what poor creatures we are! After all my fair proposals yesterday, I was seized with a most violent pain in the right kidney and parts adjacent, which forced me instantly to go to bed and send for Clarkson. He came, inquired, and pronounced the complaint to be gravel augmented by bile. I was in great agony till about two o'clock, but awoke with the pain gone. I got up, had a fire in my dressing closet, and had Dalglish to shave me—two trifles, which I only mention, because they are contrary to my hardy and independent personal habits. But although a man cannot be a hero to his valet, his valet in sickness becomes of great use to him. I cannot expect that the first will be the last visit of this cruel complaint: but ‘shall we receive good at the hand of God, and not receive evil?’

*January 2, 1826.* “Weather clearing up in Edinburgh once more, and all will, I believe, do well. I am pressed to get on with *Woodstock*, and must try. I wish I could open a good vein of interest which would breathe freely. I must take my old way, and write myself into good-humour with my task. It is only when I dally with what I am about, look back and aside, instead of keeping my eyes straight forward, that I feel those cold sinkings of the heart.”

*January 5.* Got the desired accommodation [the £10,000 raised on Abbotsford] which will put J. B. quite straight, but am a little anxious still about Constable. He had immense stock, to be sure, and most valuable, but he may have sacrifices to make to convert a large proportion of it into ready money.

*January 7.* I wrought till two o'clock—indeed till I was almost nervous with correcting and scribbling. I then walked, or rather was dragged through the snow by Tom Purdie, while Skene accompanied. What a blessing there is in a fellow like Tom, whom no familiarity can spoil, whom you may scold and praise and joke with, knowing the quality of the man is unalterable in his love and reverence to his master. Use an ordinary servant in the same way, and he will be your master in a month. We should thank God for the snow as well as

summer flowers. This brushing exercise has put all my nerves into tone again, which were really jarred with fatigue until my very backbone seemed breaking. This comes of trying to do too much. J. B.'s news are as good as possible.—Prudence, prudence, and all will do excellently.

January 15. Thermometer at 10; water in my dressing-room frozen to flint; yet I had a fine walk yesterday, the sun dancing delightfully on 'grim Nature's visage hoar.' Were it not the plague of being dragged along by another person, I should like such weather as well as summer, but having Tom Purdie to do this office reconciles me to it. *I cannot cleik with John*, as old Mrs. Mure (of Caldwell) used to say. I mean, that an ordinary menial servant thus hooked to your side reminds me of the twin bodies mentioned by Pitscottie, being two trunks on the same waist and legs. One died before the other, and remained a dead burden on the back of its companion. Such is the close union with a person whom you cannot well converse with, and whose presence is yet indispensable to your getting on. An actual companion, whether humble or your equal, is still worse. But Tom Purdie is just the thing, kneaded up between the friend and servant, as well as Uncle Toby's bowling-green between sand and clay. You are certain he is proud as well as patient under his burden, and you are under no more constraint than with a pony. I must ride him to-day if the weather holds up. Meantime, I will correct that curious fellow Pepys' Diary.—I mean the article I have made of it for the *Quarterly*.

Edinburgh, January 16. Came through cold roads to as cold news. Hurst and Robinson have suffered a bill to come back upon Constable, which I suppose infers the ruin of both houses. We shall soon see. Dined with the Skenes.

January 17. James Ballantyne this morning, good honest fellow, with a visage as black as the crook. He hopes no salvation; has indeed taken measures to stop. It is hard, after having fought such a battle. Have apologized for not attending the Royal Society Club, who have a *gaudeamus* on this day, and seemed to count much on my being the preses. My old acquaintance, Miss Elizabeth Clerk, sister of Willie, died suddenly. I cannot choose but wish it had been Sir W. S.; and yet the feeling is unmanly. I have Anne, my wife, and Charles, to look after. I felt rather sneaking as I came home from the Parliament-House—felt as if I were liable *monstrari digito* in no very pleasant way. But this must be borne *cum coeteris*; and, thank God, however uncomfortable, I do not feel despondent. I have seen Cadell, Ballantyne, and Hogarth: all advise me to execute a trust of my property for payment

'of my obligations; so does John Gibson,<sup>1</sup> and so I resolve to do. My wife and daughter are gloomy, but yet patient."

*January 18.* 'He that sleeps too long in the morning, let him borrow the pillow of a debtor.' So says the Spaniard, and so says I. I had of course an indifferent night of it. I wish these two days were over; but the worst is *over*.

*January 21.* Susannah in *Tristram Shandy* thinks death is best, net in bed. I am sure trouble and vexation are not. The watches of the night press wearily when disturbed by fruitless regrets and disagreeable anticipations. But let it pass.

'Well, Goodman Time, or blunt, or keen,  
Move thou quick, or take thy leisure,  
Longest day will have its e'en,  
Weariest life but treads a measure.'

*January 22.* I feel neither dishonoured nor broken down by the bad—now really bad—news I have received. I have walked my last on the domains I have planted—sate the last time in the halls I have built. But death would have taken them from me if misfortune had spared them. My poor people whom I loved so well!—There is just another die to turn up against me in this run of ill-luck;—*i.e.* if I should break my magic wand in the fall from this elephant, and lose my popularity with my fortune. Then *Woodstock* and *Bony* may both go to the paper-maker, and I may take to smoking cigars and drinking grog, or turn devotee, and intoxicate the brain another way. In prospect of absolute ruin, I wonder if they would let me leave the Court of Session. I would like, methinks, to go abroad,

'And lay my bones far from the *Tweed*.'

But I find my eyes moistening, and that will not do. I will not yield without a fight for it. It is odd, when I set myself to work *doggedly*, as Dr. Johnson would say, I am exactly the same man as I ever was—neither low-spirited nor *distract*. In prosperous times I have sometimes felt my fancy and powers of language flag, but adversity is to me at least a tonic and bracer; the fountain is awakened from its inmost recesses, as if the spirit of affliction had troubled it in his passage.

Poor Mr. Pole the harper [who taught Scott's daughters] sent to offer me £500 or £600, probably his all. There is much good in the world, after all.

<sup>1</sup> Lockhart notes: "Mr. John Gibson, junior, W.S., Mr. James Jollie, W.S., and Mr. Alexander Monypenny, W.S., were the three gentlemen who ultimately agreed to take charge, as trustees, of Sir Walter Scott's affairs; and certainly no gentlemen ever acquitted themselves of such an office in a manner more honourable to themselves, or more satisfactory to a client and his creditors."

January 23. Slept ill, not having been abroad these eight days—*splendida bilis*. Then a dead sleep in the morning, and when the awakening comes, a strong feeling how well I could dispense with it for once and for ever. This passes away, however, as better and more dutiful thoughts arise in my mind. I know not if my imagination has flagged,—probably it has; but at least my powers of labour have not diminished during the last melancholy week. On Monday and Tuesday, my exertions were suspended. Since Wednesday inclusive, I have written thirty-eight of my close MS. pages, of which seventy make a volume of the usual Novel size.

January 24. I went to the Court for the first time to-day, and, like the man with the large nose, thought everybody was thinking of me and my mishaps. Many were, undoubtedly, and all rather regrettingly; some obviously affected. It is singular to see the difference of men's manner whilst they strive to be kind or civil in their way of addressing me. Some smiled as they wished me good-day, as if to say, 'Think nothing about it, my lad; it is quite out of our thoughts.' Others greeted me with the affected gravity which one sees and despises at a funeral. The best-bred—all, I believe, meaning equally well—just shook hands and went on. A foolish puff in the papers, calling on men and gods to assist a popular author, who having choused the public of many thousands, had not the sense to keep wealth when he had it. If I am hard pressed, and measures used against me, I must use all means of legal defence, and subscribe myself bankrupt in a petition for sequestration. It is the course one should, at any rate, have advised a client to take. But for this I would, in a Court of Honour, deserve to lose my spurs. No,—if they permit me, I will be their vassal for life, and dig in the mine of my imagination to find diamonds (or what may sell for such) to make good my engagements, not to enrich myself. And this from no reluctance to be called the Insolvent, which I probably am, but because I will not put out of the power of my creditors the resources, mental or literary, which yet remain to me.

January 31. There being nothing in the roll this morning, I stay at home from the Court, and add another day's perfect labour to *Woodstock*, which is worth five days of snatched intervals, when the current of thought and invention is broken in upon, and the mind shaken and diverted from its purpose by a succession of petty interruptions. I have now no pecuniary provisions to embarrass me, and I think, now the shock of the discovery is past and over, I am much better off on the whole. I feel as if I had shaken off from my shoulders a great mass of garments—rich, indeed, but always more a burden than a comfort. I shall be free of a hundred petty public duties

'imposed on me as a man of consideration—of the expense of a great hospitality—and, what is better, of the great waste of time connected with it. I have known in my day all kinds of society, and can pretty well estimate how much or how little one loses by retiring from all but that which is very intimate. I sleep, and eat and work as I was wont; and if I could see those about me as indifferent to the loss of rank as I am, I should be completely happy. As it is, Time must salve that sore, and to Time I trust it.

Since the 14th of this month no guest has broken bread in my house, save G. H. Gordon one morning at breakfast. This happened never before since I had a house of my own. But I have played Abou Hassan long enough; and if the Caliph comes I would turn him back again.

*February 1.* A most generous letter (though not more so than I expected) from Walter and Jane, offering to interpose with their fortune, &c. God Almighty forbid!—that were too unnatural in me to accept, though dutiful and affectionate in them to offer."

These extracts at least indicate the story; but to appreciate the man, the daily workings of his mind must be followed, to see how far even in the blackest hour he could concentrate on other affairs than his own. Not only this; we see how the lifelong observer of nature consciously observed himself and those about him at this crisis of fate.

The result came to this: Hurst and Robinson went bankrupt for £300,000, Constable for £250,000; and Ballantyne owed £117,000. It was open to Ballantyne's firm to declare itself insolvent, compound with its creditors, and start afresh. In that case whatever Ballantyne possessed would be sold and would go towards meeting the claims, and he would be left to begin the world again. In like manner, all Scott's personal property would pass to the creditors, including his books and the furniture of Abbotsford, as well as the liferent of the lands. But he would issue from the transaction free of liabilities and would be free to apply to his own use the earnings of his pen—by far the major part of his income.

Under these conditions the creditors would receive settlement in part. Constable proved able to pay three shillings in the pound.

What Scott proposed was that, instead of declaring him bankrupt, the creditors should agree to allow him to continue working for their benefit, instead of for his own: that he should have the use of Abbotsford with its furniture, and that trustees should be appointed to receive all his incomings. In like manner the printing press was to carry on its work, under supervision. After some hesitation, the body of creditors agreed to this arrangement; Ballantyne was continued as "literary manager of the printing house," at a moderate salary, and the great Magician turned himself into a slave of the lamp.

He was fifty-five, and broken in health, when he set himself to the task of earning in what remained of life as much as even to-day would seem a large fortune, to pay off debts which he had not incurred by his personal expenditure.

The house and lands of Abbotsford could not be sold, for they had been settled by deed on his son and daughter-in-law. There was a suggestion that the settlement could be made void by law; but the question was not tried. Nevertheless, it was an additional motive with Scott to undertake his heavy task that he might be accused of having acted improperly in putting this property out of reach of creditors when his liabilities were so great. And, undoubtedly, had he for an instant realised the extent of these liabilities, the accusation would have had grounds; neither can one deny that he ought to have known the extent of his possible indebtedness. No candid examiner of facts can even question that he erred in ignorance; nor can any human being deny that for what he had done wrong he set himself to make good.

On this matter Carlyle, of all men, has some singular observations:

"It was a hard trial. He met it proudly, bravely,—like a brave proud man of the world. Perhaps there had been a prouder way still: to have owned honestly that he *was* unsuccessful then, all bankrupt, broken in the world's goods and repute; and to have turned elsewhere for some refuge. Refuge did lie elsewhere; but it was not Scott's course or fashion of

mind, to seek it there. To say: Hitherto I have been all in the wrong, and this my fame and pride, now broken, was an empty delusion and spell of accursed witchcraft. It was difficult for flesh and blood! He said, I will retrieve myself, and make my point good yet, or die for it. Silently, like a proud strong man he put himself to the Herculean task of removing rubbish-mountains since that was it; of paying large ransoms by what he could write and sell."

In plain words, Scott could have allowed himself to be declared bankrupt, and in the interests of the higher morality, could have stopped writing. How would that have answered his creditors? From first to last—in 1814 as 1826—his cry was, No man shall lose a penny by me. He did not trouble to add, "if I die for it": but he made clear beyond yea or nay that he meant it.

And since Carlyle passes judgment from so lofty an eminence, let us say that however we judge these writings of Scott's last period which were planned for publication, there remain to us also the pages of his Journal; and that many a plain man will find in them a philosophy broader, saner, more generous, more helpful in the difficult passages of life, than he is likely to discover in all the writings—however laboriously wrought, however eloquent, however decent and manly—which stand to the credit of Thomas Carlyle.

The rest of Scott's life was spent in the effort to maintain, not his literary reputation, but his honour as a citizen. If it were a sin to covet this honour, he was the most offending soul alive. If it were ambition to seek to pay off a mountain of debt, he was no less ambitious than Balzac's honest merchant of cosmetics, César Birotteau; and he did not rate much more highly the wares he sold to achieve his ambition. He believed they were honest wares, and that was enough for him. How good they were, must be considered later; for no one pretends that the last runnings of his fancy were as sprightly as the earlier. But for the moment we have to consider under what conditions

he had to face his portentous task. Again he himself must tell:

"February 3. This is the first time since my troubles that I felt at awaking,

'I had drunken deep  
Of all the blessedness of sleep.'

I made not the slightest pause, nor dreamed a single dream, nor even changed my side. This is a blessing to be grateful for.—There is to be a meeting of the creditors to-day, but I care not for the issue. If they drag me into the Court, *oborto collo*, instead of going into this scheme of arrangement, they will do themselves a great injury, and perhaps eventually do me good, though it would give me much pain.

February 4. Wrote only two pages (of manuscript) and a half to-day. As the boatswain said, one can't dance always *nouther*. But, were we sure of the quality of the stuff, what opportunities for labour does this same system of retreat afford us! I am convinced that in three years I could do more than in the last ten, but for the mine being, I fear, exhausted. Give me my popularity (*an awful postulate!*) and all my present difficulties shall be a joke in four years; and it is *not* lost yet, at least.

February 8. Letters received yesterday from Lord Montagu, John Morritt, and Mrs. Hughes—kind and dear friends all—with solicitous enquiries. But it is very tiresome to tell my story over again, and I really hope I have few more friends intimate enough to ask me for it. I dread letter-writing, and envy the old hermit of Prague, who never saw pen or ink. What then? one must write—it is a part of the law we live on. Talking of writing, I finished my six pages, neat and handsome, yesterday.—N.B. At night I fell asleep, and the oil dropped from the lamp upon my manuscript. Will this extreme unction make it go smoothly down with the public?

'Thus idly we profane the sacred time,  
By silly prose, light jest, and lighter rhyme.'

I have a song to write, too, and I am not thinking of it. I trust it will come upon me at once—a sort of catch it should be.<sup>1</sup> I walked out, feeling a little overwrought.

Edinburgh, February 10. Went through, for a new day, the task of buttoning, which seems to me somehow to fill up more

<sup>1</sup> This was the "Glee for King Charles," *Woodstock*, chap. xx.



of my morning than usual—not, certainly, that such is the case, but that my mind attends to the process, having so little left to hope or fear. The half hour between waking and rising has all my life proved propitious to any task which was exercising my invention. When I got over any knotty difficulty in a story, or have had in former times to fill up a passage in a poem, it was always when I first opened my eyes that the desired ideas thronged upon me. This is so much the case, that I am in the habit of relying upon it, and saying to myself, when I am at a loss, 'Never mind; we shall have it at seven o'clock to-morrow morning'."

Then came an interruption in his task of writing thirty pages of a novel daily. The Bank of Scotland showed disposition to claim the unfinished *Woodstock* and unfinished *Napoleon* as part of Constable's estate, though Constable owed Scott money more than equal to the sums which Scott had received as advance on these unfinished works. Scott's view was that in this case he would sooner submit to bankruptcy, as this would make his self-imposed task of clearing off the whole impossible.

He proposed to see the trustee appointed on behalf of the bank, Mr. Monypenny, an old friend.

"He is a man of perfect honour and reputation; and I have nothing to ask which such a man would not either grant or convince me was unreasonable. I have, to be sure, something of a constitutional and hereditary obstinacy, but it is in me a dormant quality. Convince my understanding, and I am perfectly docile; stir my passions by coldness or affronts, and the devil would not drive me from my purpose."

While this was in dispute, he felt no urgency to go on with *Woodstock*, and a turn in public affairs roused him to action. As a consequence of the financial instability which had spread so much ruin, the Government proposed to take from private banks the power of circulating their own notes. This was to apply equally to Scotland. Only the Bank of England would be left with power of issue, and that only of notes over £5. Scotch banks, merchants and traders alike resented this, and Scott, holding that this was matter in which Scottish opinion should prevail,

came forward with a publication inspired by Swift's famous example.

"February 18. I set about Malachi Malagrowther's Letter on the late disposition to change everything in Scotland to an English model, but, without resolving about the publication. They do treat us very provokingly.

' O Land of *Cakes!* said the *Northern* bard,  
Though all the world betrays thee,  
One faithful pen thy rights shall guard,  
One faithful harp shall praise thee';

Ballantyne complained that Scott was taking more pains with this temporary pamphlet than with works of more moment of his fortunes:

"February 24, I have certainly bestowed enough of revision and correction. But the cases are different. In a novel or poem I run the course alone—here I am taking up the cudgels, and may expect a drubbing in return. Besides, I do feel that this is public matter in which the country is deeply interested; and, therefore, is far more important than anything referring to my fame or fortune alone. . . .

. . . Whimsical enough, that when I was trying to animate Scotland against the currency bill, John Gibson brought me the deed of trust, assigning my whole estate, to be subscribed by me; so that I am turning patriot, and taking charge of the affairs of the country, on the very day I proclaim myself incapable of managing my own. What of that? Who would think of their own *trumvery* debts, when they are taking the support of the whole system of Scottish banking on their shoulders? Odd enough too—on this day, for the first time since the awful 17th January, we entertain a party at dinner—Lady Anna Maria Elliot, W. Clerk, John A. Murray, and Thomas Thomson—as if we gave a dinner on account of my *cessio fori*."

The first Letter came out on March 1st, and made a great stir. Scott continued to comment ironically on the whimsicality. But up spoke pride.

"On the whole, I am glad of this bruilzie, as far as I am concerned; people will not dare talk of me as an object of pity

'—no more 'poor-manning'. Who asks how many *punds* Scots the old champion had in his pocket when

'He set a bugle to his mouth  
And blew so loud and shrill,  
The trees in greenwood shook thereat,  
Sae loud rang every hill?'

This sounds conceited enough, yet is not far from truth."

It added to his pride that by attacking the project of Government, he risked alienating friends; and there was soon evidence that Lord Melville, specially in charge of Scotch affairs, was offended.

"*March* 10. Many men would deeply regret a breach with so old a friend as Lord Melville, and many men would be in despair at losing the good graces of a Minister of State for Scotland, and all pretty views about what might be done for myself and my sons, especially Charles."

But Scott's friends in the Ministry wrote to him, with regret for the difference, but with full assurance of unbroken friendship. So all went well; and to crown all, Malachi's attack succeeded, and Scotland kept its separate arrangement, under which it had prospered.

Only a special student is likely to read Malachi—who claimed on the first page to be "the lineal descendant of Sir Mungo Malagrowth," who makes a figure in the *Fortunes of Nigel*. It may be noted that Scott's parentage of Malachi was avowed, and that this choice of a name went far towards proclaiming identity with the author who created that bitter-tongued and querulous courtier of James I. But such as read will be astonished at the vigour of this man and the fullness of his mind. In the first of three long Epistles the imitation of Swift is evident, and there is no better example of Scott's prose style when applied to purposes of discussion. In the second, he forgets the ironic tone, and his discourse is largely adorned, after the fashion of his daily talk, with humorous anecdotes applied to enforce a conclusion. But

what impresses one is the extent of his acquaintance with the business life of the whole kingdom, and his power to elucidate the manner in which banking had been adapted to it. Probably, the economist who thought of writing on Scott as a leading authority on Economics, had a special eye on Malachi. But was there ever another writer upon banking whose discourse was so peppered with literary allusion? There is always at his pen's end some apt quotation from Shakespeare—(scores of these)—or from Burns, or from contemporary drama; and in the middle comes a reference to the *Sieur Jean d'Aiglen*, whom he chanced at this time to be reading.

There are two sides to Malachi's argument: that of practical utility, which is supported by very strong reasoning, showing a complete grasp of the subject; and that of sentiment, which demands that, while the Union should be maintained, the predominant partner under the Union should respect every institution which helps Scotchmen to feel that they once were an independent kingdom and are still the living representatives of a historic nation.

This skirmish was of service to Scott for it invigorated his confidence and was a tonic to his hurt pride. Yet soon he had news that made him careless of all but sorrow. On March 15th, when the Courts rose for a recess, he went to Abbotsford, and was welcomed by "a great tumult of men and dogs, all happy to see me." Tom Purdie had been released from all farm duty and set free for charge of the wools and special attendance on his master. *Woodstock* was being brought to a close. But then came a letter from Lockhart:

"*March 17.* My worst augury is verified; the medical people think poor Johnnie is losing strength; he is gone with his mother to Brighton. The bitterness of this probably impending calamity is extreme. The child was almost too good for this world;—beautiful in features; and though spoiled by everyone, having one of the sweetest tempers as well as the quickest intellect I ever saw; a sense of humour quite extraordinary in a child, and, owing to the general notice which was taken of him, a great deal more information than suited his hours. He was

born in the eighth month, and such children are never strong—seldom long-lived. I look on this side and that, and see nothing but protracted misery—a crippled frame, and decayed constitution—occupying the attention of his parents for years, and dying at the end of that period, when their hearts were turned on him; or the poor child may die before Sophia's confinement, and that may again be a dangerous and bad affair; or she may, by increase of attention to him, injure her own health. In short, to trace into how many branches such a misery may flow, is impossible. The poor dear love had so often a slow fever that when it pressed its little lips to mine, I always foreboded to my own heart what all I fear are now aware of.

*March 18.* I had intended to have staid at home to-day; but Tom more wisely had resolved that I should walk, and hung about the window with his axe and my own in his hand till I turned out with him, and helped to cut some fine paling.

*March 19.* Lady S., the faithful and true companion of my fortunes, good and bad, for so many years has, but with difficulty, been prevailed on to see Dr. Abercrombie, and his opinion is far from favourable. Her asthmatic complaints are fast terminating in hydropsy, as I have long suspected; yet the announcement of the truth is overwhelming. They are to stay a little longer in town to try the effects of a new medicine. On Wednesday they propose to return hither—a new affliction, where there was enough before; yet her constitution is so good, that if she will be guided by advice, things may be yet ameliorated. God grant it! for really these misfortunes come too close upon each other.

*March 28.* We have now been in solitude for some time—myself nearly totally so, excepting at meals. One is tempted to ask himself, knocking at the door of his own heart, Do you love this extreme loneliness? I can answer conscientiously, *I do*. The love of solitude was with me a passion of early youth, when in my teens, I used to fly from company to indulge in visions and airy castles of my own, the disposal of ideal wealth, and the exercise of imaginary power. This feeling prevailed even till I was eighteen, when love and ambition awakening with other passions, threw me more into society, from which I have, however, at times withdrawn myself, and have been always even glad to do so. I have risen from a feast satiated; and unless it be one or two persons of very strong intellect, or whose spirits and good-humour amuse me, I wish neither to see the high, the low, nor the middling class of society.

*April 18.* This morning I go down to Kelso, to poor Don's funeral. It is, I suppose, forty years since I saw him first. I was staying at Sydenham, a lad of fourteen, or by'r Lady some sixteen; and he, a boy of six or seven, was brought to

visit me on a pony, a groom holding the leading rein—and now I, an old grey man, am going to lay him in his grave. Sad work. The very road I go, is a road of grave recollections.

*Abbotsford, April 19.* Returned last night from the house of death and mourning to my own, now the habitation of sickness and anxious apprehension. The result cannot yet be judged. —Two melancholy things last night. I left my pallet in our family apartment, to make way for a female attendant, and removed to a dressing-room adjoining, when to return, or whether ever, God only can tell. Also my servant cut my hair, which used to be poor Charlotte's personal task. I hope she will not observe it.

*April 24.* Good news from Brighton. Sophia is confined, and both she and her baby are doing well, and the child's name is announced to be Walter—a favourite name in our family, and I trust of no bad omen. Yet it is no charm for life. Of my father's family, I was the second Walter, if not the third. I am glad the name came my way, for it was borne by my father, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather; also by the grandsire of that last-named venerable person, who was the first laird of Raeburn.

*May 4.* On visiting Lady Scott's sick-room this morning I found her suffering, and I doubt if she knew me. Yet, after breakfast she seemed serene and composed. The worst is, she cannot speak out about the symptoms under which she is suffering. Sad, sad, world! and under the most melancholy tension, for what consolation can hold out under these conditions? My niece, Anne Scott, a sensible, and young woman, arrived to-day, and come down to assist us in our distress from so far as Wittenham. This is a great consolation.

*May II.*

‘Der Abschied's Tag est da,  
Schwer liegt es auf den Herzen—schwer.’

Charlotte was unable to take leave of me, being in a sound sleep, after a very indifferent night. Perhaps it was as well. Emotion might have hurt her; and nothing I could have expressed would have been worth the risk. I have foreseen, for two years and more, that this menaced event could not be far distant. I have seen plainly, within the last two months, that recovery was hopeless. And yet to part with the companion of 29 years, when so very ill—that, I did not, could not foresee. It withers my heart to think of it, and to recollect that I can hardly hope again to seek confidence and counsel from that ear to which all might be safely confided.

*May 13.* The projected measure against the Scottish bank-notes has been abandoned. Malachi might clap his wings upon this, but, alas! domestic anxiety has cut his comb.

*May 15.* Received the melancholy intelligence that all is over at Abbotsford.

*Abbotsford, May 18.* They are arranging the chamber of death—that which was long the apartment of connubial happiness, and of whose arrangements (better than in richer houses) she was so proud. They are treading fast and thick. For weeks you could have heard a foot-fall. Oh, my God!

*May 19.* Anne, poor love, is ill with her exertions and agitation—cannot walk—and is still hysterical, though less so. We speak freely of her whom we have lost, and mix her name with our ordinary conversation. This is the rule of nature. All primitive people speak of their dead, and I think virtuously and wisely. The idea of blotting the names of those who are gone out of the language and familiar discourse of those to whom they were dearest, is one of the rules of ultra-civilization, which, in so many instances, strangles natural feeling by way of avoiding a painful sensation. The Highlanders speak of their dead children as freely as of their living members—how poor Colin or Robert would have acted in such or such a situation. It is a generous and manly tone of feeling; and so far as it may be adopted without affectation or contradicting the general habits of society, I reckon on observing it."

The sons came home; Anne Scott—henceforward to be her father's main prop—had been joined by a cousin and namesake. The funeral at Dryburgh was on May 23rd.

*May 23.* The whole scene floats as a sort of dream before me—the beautiful day, the grey ruins covered and hidden among clouds of foliage and flourish, where the grave, even in the lap of beauty, lay lurking, and gaped for its prey. Then the grave looks, the hasty important bustle of men with spades and mattocks—the train of carriages—the coffin containing the creature that was so long the dearest on earth to me, and whom I was to consign to the very spot which in pleasure-parties we so frequently visited.

*May 26.* Dull, drooping, cheerless, has this day been. I cared not carrying my own gloom to the girls, and so sate in my own room, dawdling with old papers, which awakened as many stings as if they had been the nest of fifty scorpions. Then the solitude seemed so absolute—my poor Charlotte would have been in the room half a score of times to see if the fire burned, and to ask a hundred kind questions. Well, that

is over—and if it cannot be forgotten, must be remembered with patience.”

Miss Edgeworth in the letters which describe her visit to Edinburgh says that it was the fashion to laugh at Lady Scott; but she herself found her both kind and intelligent; that she had evidently been very handsome, with large dark eyes. Scott himself in the *Journal* speaks of her foibles, but only to say that they were lovable. One entry, which Lockhart suppressed, just after the crash, shows that she was less magnanimous than he had hoped, and was disposed to blame him for having “trusted men too much.” Yet the *Journal* in a score of places repeats the cry of loneliness, and an echo of it comes into a story written within the first years of his widowerhood. In *The Surgeon's Daughter* (heaven forbid that I should counsel anyone to read it) these sentences describe the feelings of the country doctor who had lost his wife in childbed:

“Every morning he missed the affectionate charges which recommended him to pay attention to his own health while he was endeavouring to restore that blessing to his patients. Every evening as he returned from his weary round, it was with all the consciousness of a kind and affectionate reception from one eager to tell, and interested to hear, all the little events of the day.”

*The Surgeon's Daughter* is part of a work of fiction which less than a fortnight after his wife's death Scott planned as “something that can go on between the necessary intervals of *Nap* . . . an *olla podrida* into which any odds and ends of narrative or description may be thrown.” These *Chronicles of the Canongate* ultimately contained three stories, “The Highland Widow,” “The Two Drovers,” and “The Surgeon's Daughter,” of which only the last—a tale laid partly in India—is without merit. These must be discussed later; but it is time to say a word of *Woodstock*, carried through and completed when the very bottom seemed to be falling out of his world.



It is an imaginary story of the period in which Charles II was in flight after the battle of Worcester; and the fugitive prince figures largely. His figure would have done credit to Dumas, though no doubt, the Frenchman would have painted Charles's gallantries with a broader touch. But the interest of the book lies in the Cromwell—whom Scott detested on principle. He gives with extraordinary power the sense of weight and command which attended upon a greatness that he was not loath to recognise; the scene in Colonel Everard's lodging when a heavy foot is heard on the stair conveys the personality even before Cromwell enters; and the climax of this, when Wilddrake, the disguised cavalier, lunges full at the Protector's breast, is at once startling and natural. Then, and not only then, Scott makes magnanimity a leading part of Cromwell's greatness.

In short, I think that *Woodstock* holds its own well, as the last of Scott's series of British chronicle novels which began with *Ivanhoe*; but Lockhart is no doubt right in thinking that public desire to see what Scott would bring forth after a period of such personal tribulation—for his misfortunes were widely known—may have accounted for the book's unusual success. It brought in eight thousand guineas to the creditors. One may hope, too, that whoever reads the story knowing when and how it was written, will feel a tenderness for it. If there was nothing else to stir this, Maida, figuring as Sir Harry Lee's faithful Bevis all through the book, is well fit to touch sympathy.

But of all that came out of this grim time, the ballad of "Bonny Dundee" should never be forgotten. He wrote it on a day when the menace seemed lifting from "the same impulse which makes birds sing when the storm has blown over." I cannot refrain from quoting a few verses of this gallant lilt—perhaps the best thing that Scott ever did in this vein:

To the Lords of Convention 'twas Claver'se who spoke,  
 'Ere the King's crown shall fall there are crowns to be  
     broke;  
 So let each Cavalier who loves honour and me,  
 Come follow the bonnet of Bonny Dundee.'

Come fill up my cup, come fill up my can,  
Come saddle your horses, and call up your men,  
Come open the West Port, and let me gang free,  
And it's room for the bonnets of Bonny Dundee!

He spurr'd to the foot of the proud Castle rock,  
And with the gay Gordon he gallantly spoke;  
'Let Mons Meg and her marrows speak twa words, or  
three,  
For the love of the bonnet of Bonny Dundee.'

The Gordon demands of him which way he goes—  
'Where'er shall direct me the shade of Montrose!  
Your Grace in short space shall hear tidings of me,  
Or that low lies the bonnet of Bonny Dundee.

'There are hills beyond Pentland, and lands beyond  
Forth,  
If there's lords in the Lowlands, there's chiefs in the North;  
There are wild Dunewassals, three thousand times three,  
Will cry *hoigh*! for the bonnet of Bonny Dundee.

'There's brass on the target of barken'd bull-hide,  
There's steel in the scabbard that dangles beside;  
The brass shall be burnish'd, the steel shall flash free,  
At a toss of the bonnet of Bonny Dundee.

'Away to the hills, to the caves, to the rocks—  
Ere I own an usurper, I'll couch with the fox;  
And tremble, false Whigs, in the midst of your glee,  
You have not seen the last of my bonnet and me!'

He wave his proud hand, and the trumpets were blown,  
The kettle-drums clash'd, and the horsemen rode on,  
Till on Ravelston's cliffs and on Clernuston's lee,  
Died away the wild war-notes of Bonny Dundee.

Come fill up my cup, come fill up my can,  
Come saddle the horses and call up the men,  
Come open your gates, and let me gae free,  
For it's up with the bonnets of Bonny Dundee!

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE SLAVE OF THE LAMP

1826-30

IN these first months of his widowhood Scott was living in a lodging at North St. David Street. He was not quite alone, for the old butler, Dalgleish, refused to be parted from him, and wept till he got his way. But Dalgleish could not alter the accommodation, and the place was bug-ridden. With July came a move to Abbotsford, where Captain Walter and his Jane joined Sir Walter in August, in good health, "which has made me happier than anything that has happened these several months. If we had Lockhart and Sophia this would be a meeting of the beings dearest to me in life." Meanwhile, the labour on *Napoleon* was steady. In September he "began to fear it would swell to seven volumes." It reached nine.

In October there was a change of scene. He had feared arrest for debt in London, as some of the English creditors were not willing parties to the compact; but being advised that he could go there, he concluded, "if I may, I in a manner must"—to examine the papers about Buonaparte at St. Helena, which were in Government keeping. So forth he set in October, his daughter accompanying him, by coach; they stopped at Rokeby where Morritt's company was a pleasure, and in London there was "an April-weather meeting" with Sophia and Lockhart.

London was kinder than ever; there were breakfasts with Rogers and Moore, and a visit by command to the

Lodge in Windsor Forest, where George IV made much of his guest and set him in talk; "too much perhaps—for he has the art of raising one's spirits and making you forget the *retenue* which is prudent everywhere, especially at court."—The day which began with breakfast at Windsor ended with supper off oysters and porter in Terry's "squirrel cage of a dwelling" over the Adelphi Theatre.

From London the seeker after documents decided to go on to Paris; and here, as soon as the news of his arrival spread, there was a rush of visitors. Even the Dames des Halles came from their fish stalls "with a bouquet like a maypole." But whatever was finest and fairest in Paris came with compliments. At the Tuileries Charles X stopped, as he passed into chapel, to say some civil words "which produced a great sensation." Scott remembered him a royal exile, living at Holyrood House—in exile as on the throne "debonair and courteous to the highest degree."

The visit was over in a fortnight. On resuming the Journal in London he wrote (on November 10th):

"It would be an unworthy piece of affectation, did I not allow that I have been pleased—highly pleased—to find a species of literature intended only for my own country, has met such an extensive and favourable reception in a foreign land, where there was so much *à priori* to oppose its progress. For my work I think I have done a good deal; but, above all, I have been confirmed strongly in the impressions I had previously formed of the character of Nap., and may attempt to draw him with a firmer hand.

The succession of new people and unusual incidents has had a favourable effect on my mind, which was becoming rutted like an ill-kept highway. My thoughts have for some time flowed in another and pleasanter channel than through the melancholy course into which my solitary and deprived state had long driven them, and which gave often pain to be endured without complaint, and without sympathy. 'For this relief,' as Marcellus says, in *Hamlet*, 'much thanks.'

There was another stay in London, with sittings to Lawrence, that the portrait for the king might be finished,

and with interviews to assure the future of Charles Scott, who wished to enter the Foreign Office. But above all there was the Duke of Wellington, whom he met daily for a week, and found most helpful; it was arranged that they should correspond during the progress of Scott's work. Anne Scott was at some of these parties and "could not look enough at the *vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*."

On their way home, they took Oxford, and breakfasted with Charles Scott at Brasenose.

"How pleasant it is for a father to sit at his child's board! It is like the aged man reclining under the shadow of the oak he has planted."

And so back to Edinburgh. Sir Walter took and furnished a house in Walker Street, where his daughter could be with him. Then followed six months of unintermitting toil—embittered by rheumatism and other ailments.

"December 16. Another bad night. I remember I used to think a slight illness was a luxurious thing. My pillow was then softened by the hand of affection, and the little cares put in exercise to soothe the languor or pain were more flattering and pleasing than the consequences of the illness were disagreeable. It was a new scene to be watched and attended, and I used to think that the *malade imaginaire* gained something by his humour. It is different in the latter stages;—the old post-chaise gets more shattered and out of order at every turn—windows will not be pulled up, doors refuse to open, or being open, will not shut again—which last is rather my case. The best is, the long halt will arrive at last, and cure all.—This was a day of labour, agreeably varied by a pain which rendered it scarce possible to sit upright. My Journal is getting a vile surgical aspect."

Abbotsford at the Easter recess made a change.

"March 13. I expect this will not be a day of work but of idleness, for my books are not come. Would to God I could make it light, thoughtless idleness, such as I used to have when the silly smart fancies ran in my brain like the bubbles in a glass of champagne—as brilliant to my thinking, as intoxicating, as evanescent. But the wine is somewhat on the lees. Perhaps it was but indifferent cyder after all. Yet I am happy in this

place, where everything looks friendly from old Tom to young Nym.<sup>1</sup> After all, he has little to complain of who has left so many things that like him.

April 24. Still deep snow—a foot thick in the courtyard, I dare say. Severe welcome for the poor lambs now coming into the world. But what signifies whether they die just now, or a little while after to be united with *sallad* at luncheon time? It signifies a good deal too. There is a period, though a short one, when they dance among the gowans, and seem happy. As for your aged sheep or wether, the sooner they pass to the *Norman* side of the vocabulary, the better. They are like some old dowager ladies and gentlemen of my acquaintance—no one cares about them till they come to be *cut up*, and then we see how the tallow lies on the kidneys and the chine.”

• He did not often write so well when he wrote for publication; the trained instinct automatically chooses the word, and ranges the cadence. Observe the interlocked alliterations of that last grim pleasantry.—“Norman” relates to the observations in *Ivanhoe*; “sheep” or “hog” Saxon, “mutton” or “pork” Norman words.

Or again observe what reflection follows when he has got back to Edinburgh and learnt the suicide of a friend—like himself, of imaginative habit:

• “Imagination renders us liable to be the victims of occasional low spirits. All belonging to this gifted, as it is called, but often unhappy class, must have felt, that but for the dictates of religion, or the natural recoil of the mind from the idea of dissolution, there have been times when they would have been willing to throw away life as a child does a broken toy. I am sure I know one who has often felt so. O God! what are we?—Lords of nature?—Why, a tile drops from a house-top, which an elephant would not feel more than the fall of a sheet of paste-board, and there lies his lordship. Or something of inconceivably minute origin—the pressure of a bone, or the inflammation of a particle of the brain—takes place, and the emblem of the Deity destroys himself or some one else. We hold our health and our reason on terms slighter than one would desire, were it in their choice, to hold an Irish cabin.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nimrod—a staghound.

<sup>2</sup> This passage, given as part of the Journal by Lockhart, does not occur in the full reprint. It may have been in a letter from Scott to Lockhart himself.

Meanwhile, the great secret of the novels had been no secret since the bankruptcy; but there had been no official recognition of the truth. On February 23rd, 1827, a dinner was held in aid of a charitable fund for the benefit of old and needy actors, and Scott, always much in demand for such purposes, was asked to abandon for the first time his retirement from public functions and to preside. Lord Meadowbank, the appointed speaker to the toast of the Chairman, asked Scott if he might allude to the dispelled mystery. It was agreed, and Lord Meadowbank told the audience:

"The mighty magician who has rolled back the current of time and conjured up before our living senses the men and the manners of days which have long passed away, stands revealed to the eyes and the hearts of his affectionate and adoring countrymen. . . . I propose the health of Sir Walter Scott."

There was a wild tumult of applause, and Scott answered in a vein of professional banter—declining to discuss "why my confession has been so long deferred. Perhaps caprice might have a considerable share in the matter."

One sentence in the speech is significant:

"The wand is now broken and the book buried."

He might write more, he did write more; but the Great Magician knew, like Prospero, that his power had ended.

Such a life as Scott was living could have few events—though the break up of the Tory Ministry and Canning's decision to accept office with Whig allies disturbed him greatly—all the more because he had strong personal liking for Canning.

But the daily burden, in its form of the moment, wore to an end; and on June 9th the last page of *Napoleon* was written.

"June 10. Rose with the odd consciousness of being free of my daily task. I have heard that the fish-women go to church

of a Sunday with their creels new washed, and a few stones in them for ballast, just because they cannot walk steadily without their usual load. I feel something like them, and rather inclined to take up some light task, than to be altogether idle. I have my proof-sheets, to be sure; but what are these to a whole day? A good thought came in my head to write *Stories* for little Johnnie Lockhart, from the *History of Scotland*."

What a worker! And in these days he had resumed the habit of work at night, so that he laboured double tides. The *Napoleon* was completed within little more than a year and a half, besides much else—and in bulk it was equal to fourteen volumes of the *Waverleys*. Scott was well pleased with it, for his anticipations were answered. To begin with, the sale added no less than £18,000 to the £8,000 received for *Woodstock*; the slave of the lamp had cleared off nearly a quarter of the mountainous debt in eighteen months work. He had foreseen the popular acceptance of *Napoleon* when he wrote in his *Journal* on December 22nd, 1826:

"The story is so very interesting in itself that there is no fear of the book answering. Superficial it must be, but I do not care for the charge. Better a superficial book which brings well and strikingly together the known and acknowledged facts, than a dull, boring narrative, pausing to see farther into a millstone at every moment than the nature of the mill-stone admits."

It was not addressed to the specialist, but to the general reader, in Constable's projected *Miscellany*—of which it was the first and chief portion. Scott had thought highly enough of this venture to join in a request for leave to dedicate the whole to the King; he rejected the suggestion that this would be a lowering of the royal dignity.

"The purpose is to bring all the standard works, both in sciences and the liberal arts, within the reach of the lower classes, and enable them thus to use with advantage the education which is given them at every hand. To make boys learn to read, and then place no good books within their reach, is to give men an appetite, and leave nothing in the pantry save unwholesome and poisonous food, which, depend upon it, they will eat rather than starve."



Higher criticism of the day did not approve the *Napoleon*; but Goethe in his *Kunst und Altherthum* gives it his good word.

"What could now be more delightful to me than leisurely and calmly to sit down and listen to the discourse of such a man, while clearly, truly, and with all the skill of a great artist, he recalls to me the incidents on which through life I have meditated, and the influence of which is still daily in operation?"

A few months earlier there had been exchange of courtesies between these masters of literature. Goethe wrote from Weimar on January 12th, 1827, saying that he desired "to acknowledge the lively interest I have during many years taken in your wonderful pictures of human life"; and also that it pleased him to remember that his own writings had been "introduced in part" by Scott "to the knowledge of his own nation." Since the chance of a personal messenger offered, "it becomes me," Goethe concluded, "not to lose the opportunity now offered of praying for a continuance of your kindly regard and telling you how much a direct assurance from your own hand would gratify my old age."

Scott's letter of reply was accompanied by a copy of his *Napoleon*. Singularly enough, a further communication from Goethe acknowledging the gift and enclosing two portrait medals "to be delivered to Sir Walter Scott," was addressed to Carlyle, then known chiefly as the translator of *Wilhelm Meister*. Carlyle wrote to Scott, transcribing that large part of Goethe's letter which related to *Napoleon*. Finding himself, "in this curious fashion appointed as it were Ambassador between two Kings of Poetry," he asked that he might "have access to his native sovereign." The letter reached Scott in London, during April 1828, and by some mischance was never acknowledged—quite probably, was never read. Such neglect would have been naturally resented as a discourtesy, for Carlyle had had full justification for writing; and his letter was admirable (it will be found in the Appendix to the Journal). I do not think that Carlyle, knowing what all Edinburgh knew,

and what his own eyes told him, of Sir Walter's state of health, allowed this seeming rebuff to dwell on his mind. But it is the pity of the world that the two should not have met; for even in his ungracious essay Carlyl shows his mind poised on the turn between affectionate reverence and that superciliousness which in too many places comes uppermost.

Another notable correspondence arose out of Napoleon. Scott had seen some documents at the Colonial Office, on which he based a charge against General Gourgaud, one of the ex-Emperor's attendants in St. Helena. According to the documents, Gourgaud had stated to several persons at St. Helena that Napoleon's complaints of ill-treatment were unfounded, and had subsequently confirmed this in a conversation with the then Under Secretary of State, Mr. Goulburn; yet on returning to France he had swelled the outcry against Sir Hudson Lowe's treatment of the prisoner. On the publication of Scott's work, paragraphs appeared in the French Press to say that Gourgaud was going to London to fix a quarrel on Sir Walter. When this news reached Abbotsford, Scott bethought him of his friend William Clerk—the Darsie Latimer of *Redgauntlet*—"who has mettle in him and will think of my honour as well as my safety."

"September 4. William Clerk quite ready and willing to stand my friend if Gourgaud should come my road. He agrees with me that there is no reason why he should turn on me, but that if he does, reason or none, it is best to stand buff to him. It appears to me that what is least forgiven in a man of any mark or likelihood, is want of that article blackguardly called *pluck*. All the fine qualities of genius cannot make amends for it. We are told the genius of poets, especially, is irreconcilable with this species of grenadier accomplishment. If so, *quel chien de genre!*

September 10. Gourgaud's wrath has burst forth in a very distant clap of thunder, in which he accuses me of contriving, with the Ministry, to slander his rag of a reputation. He be d—d for a fool, to make his case worse by stirring. I shall only revenge myself by publishing the whole extracts I made

from the records of the Colonial Office, in which he will find enough to make him bite his nails.

September 17. Received from James Ballantyne the proofs of my Reply, with some cautions from mine honest friend, alarmed by a Highland colonel, who had described Gourgaud as a *mauvais garçon*, famous fencer, marksman, and so forth. I wrote, in answer, which is true, that I hoped all my friends would trust to my acting with proper caution and advice; but that if I were capable, in a moment of weakness, of doing anything short of what my honour demanded, I should die the death of a poisoned rat in a hole, out of mere sense of my own degradation. God knows, that, though life is placid enough with me, I do not feel anything to attach me to it so strongly as to occasion my avoiding any risk which duty to my character may demand from me.—I set to work with the *Tales of a Grandfather*, second volume, and finished four pages."

The reply was published in Ballantyne's paper, and the tone may be inferred from the closing sentences:

"It is sufficient to me to have shown that I have not laid to General Gourgaud's charge a single expression for which I had not the most indubitable authority. If I have been guilty of over-caudulity in attaching more weight to General Gourgaud's evidence than it deserves, I am well taught not to repeat the error, and the world, too, may profit by the lesson."

No more came of it, except further newspaper letters which Scott left to be dealt with by the Press; and he went peaceably on with his *Tales of a Grandfather*, the more happily and usefully because in this summer the Lockharts were first at a seaside place near Edinburgh and then at Abbotsford. "Hugh Littlejohn" was at this time well enough to sit on his pony and ride through the woods or on the sands beside Sir Walter on a still quieter cob than "Sybil Grey." This last of his mounts was known as Douce Davie or The Covenanter. And while Douce Davie and the child's sheltie paced soberly side by side, Scott would tell his companion the story of those events which he proposed to relate in print—after the model of Croker's *Tales from English History*. But he notes in the Diary for June 10th, when the idea first presented itself:

"I will not write mine quite so simply as Croker has done. I am persuaded both children and the lower class of readers hate books which are written *down* to their capacity, and love those that are composed more for their elders and betters. I will make, if possible, a book that a child shall understand, yet a man will feel some temptation to peruse should he chance to take it up."

When the *Tales* appeared, a reprint was called for in haste; and between one thing and another Scott's creditors at Christmas, 1827, received a dividend of six shillings in the pound—for which they were candid enough to tender a vote of thanks.

This came to the hardwrought man as the more of a relief because in the last months of that year he had been beset by one firm of creditors in London, who broke away from the general agreement and threatened proceedings against his person. At the beginning of November he saw no recourse but to take up his residence in the debtors' sanctuary, allowed by the leniency of Scots Law, at Holyrood, or to move, as his brother had done before him, to the Isle of Man, where also a debtor could not be seized.

"I knew I had a life of labour before me," he wrote in his Journal, "but I was resolved to work steadily; now they have treated me like a recusant turnspit, and put a red hot cinder into the wheel alongst with me."

He made up his mind for Holyrood, and prepared his papers for the journey and the confinement. But Messrs. Abud and Company had judged correctly that friends would be found willing to pay their claim at once in full rather than allow Sir Walter to suffer hardship. The friend who came to the rescue was no other than Sir William Forbes, who had been the successful rival in love more than thirty years before. He, without Scott's knowledge, paid the claim for £2,000, ranking himself for that amount among the general body of creditors. Only after this generous man had died did the truth come to Sir Walter's knowledge. Lockhart says that other minor payments were

made in the same way by three of his colleagues in Court. Of these Sir Walter was never told. Except for the help that came from Sir William Forbes, he died in the belief that he had depended only on his own exertions. It should be said that when the first crash came he received offers of large assistance—one of thirty thousand pounds from a complete stranger; but all these he put aside, indomitably.

In these months of anxiety, when his resolution was shaken and his plan for fighting the fight through seemed about to fail, came the meeting with Lady Jane Stuart, mother of his first love, which has been already recorded. It was now that he wrote.

“The very grave gives up its dead and time rolls back thirty years to add to my perplexities. . . . I begin to grow case-hardened, and like a stag turning at bay my naturally good temper grows fierce and dangerous.”

Strange to think that in the very days when these memories so stirred him—“matter of calm and solemn recollection, never to be forgotten, yet scarce to be remembered with pain”—when his “three years of dreaming and two of awakening” flooded back on his mind—the other survivor of that contest should be busy with preparations for the harassed man’s relief.

From that time onward, things took a gentler course. By the end of the year Scott could feel that he was, in his own phrase, “rowing with the tide,” and when he came to Abbotsford to spend his Christmas, this was the entry that he made:

“My reflections in entering my own gate to-day were of a very different and more pleasing cast than those with which I left this place about six weeks ago. I was then in doubt whether I should fly my country, or become avowedly bankrupt, and surrender up my library and household furniture, with the liferent of my estate, to sale. A man of the world will say I had better done so. No doubt had I taken this course at once I might have employed the money I have made since the in

solvency of Constable and Robinson's houses in compounding my debts. But I could not have slept sound, as I now can under the comfortable impression of receiving the thanks of my creditors, and the conscious feeling of discharging my duty as a man of honour and honesty. I see before me a long, tedious, and dark path, but it leads to stainless reputation. If I die in the harrows, as is very likely, I shall die with honour; if I achieve my task, I shall have the thanks of all concerned, and the approbation of my own conscience. And so, I think, I can fairly face the return of Christmas-Day."

By that time the project, originally conceived by Constable, which in the end ensured repayment in full to Scott's creditors, was already launched. Those copyrights which had been Constable's property were put up for sale, and the trustees of Scott's estate decided to bid for them. Cadell, Constable's former partner, who now conducted the publishing, bought the whole for £8,500 on their behalf, a bold but magnificently successful investment. Henceforward, the main task of Scott's life—and the easiest—was to furnish the introductions and illustrative notes with which the collected edition of the Poems and of the Novels was equipped.

I have said already that the work suffers, artistically, by being so encumbered; but for the purpose in hand, never was time better spent; the sale of the novels, as they appeared month by month, rose to 35,000; and there still are few private libraries which do not include a set of the forty-eight small brown volumes.

The list of volumes was not yet nearly complete in 1828. *The Chronicles of the Canongate* had appeared in November 1827; and after them followed *The Fair Maid of Perth*, which appeared in April 1828. Next to this was undertaken *Anne of Geierstein*—published in May 1829. After that, Scott wrote nothing that is the work of an unimpaired intellect.

Before considering this closing group of the novels, it is well to add a few lines of biography. On completing *The Fair Maid of Perth* he once more went with his daughter

to London. His son Walter's regiment was at Hampton Court; Charles had entered the Foreign Office; the Lockharts were at hand, and there seemed hope of a happy meeting. But the poor Hugh Littlejohn was so ill that his mother must take him to Brighton; and there was little prospect of any ending but at best a merciful deliverance.

Lady Louisa Stuart wrote to Lady Montagu: "There he is, passing these few days he has cribbed out of the year to enjoy himself, with Sophia as much at a distance from him as if he was at Edinburgh. Anne Scott is with her sister at Brighton, having put on the fire a dozen cards of invitation to fine things here, as was only right to be sure, but, as he says, some little sacrifice to a young person."

There were, however, sundry encounters of lions, and for a final leavetaking Scott and his daughter went to spend the day with his son and daughter-in-law at Hampton Court, accompanied by Rogers, Moore and Wordsworth, with Wordsworth's wife and daughter.

But the Journal grows less and less vivid; Scott had begun to discard it for long periods. Yet there is one significant entry against May 30th, when he was once more at Rokeby, and found his friend Morritt surrounded by pretty nieces.

"What there is in our partiality to female beauty that commands a species of temporary homage from the aged, as well as ecstatic admiration from the young, I cannot conceive; but it is certain that a very large portion of some other amiable quality is too little to counterbalance the absolute want of this advantage. I, to whom beauty is, and shall henceforward be, a picture, still look upon it with the quiet devotion of an old worshipper, who no longer offers incense on the shrine, but peaceably presents his inch of taper, taking special care in doing so not to burn his own fingers. Nothing in life can be more ludicrous or contemptible than an old man aping the passions of his youth."

More than one attempt had been made by over-zealous friends to arrange a marriage for this widower, who was only in his fifty-sixth year when his wife died; indeed she was scarcely four months in her grave when, as the Journal

records, some "unutterable idiot" of a Privy Councillor wrote to suggest that Scott should propose to a certain Dowager Duchess—offering his own "right honourable intervention."—Lockhart notes a later overture from a gentleman who had come to the conclusion that Sir Walter was only deterred by diffidence from proposing to his sister, and intervened to help on matters.

But in truth, during these last two years in which he still possessed unclouded faculties, Scott had become, in his own words, "a writing automaton"—from whom all that had made the joy of existence was dropping away. It was to be his fate to die slowly—and the apprehension of such an end always haunted him: Swift's case was before his mind. He could have envied Tom Purdie, who, one evening in October 1829, after a full day's work, went to sleep with his head dropped on the table, and his wife and children going and coming about him; only when they tried to rouse him for supper did they know that he was dead.—After that day, Sir Walter was, for the first time, in haste to leave Abbotsford.

If we consider the last of his novels, *The Fair Maid of Perth* and *Anne of Geierstein*, it will be difficult to find in them any moment when the joy of creation imparts itself. Yet there is a certain vividness of recaptured emotion in the young man's cliff-climbing adventure which first brings on the scene the Swiss "Maid of the Mist." Those who decide what children shall read for the purposes of examinations have a special fondness for these two works—presumably for their value as lessons in history. *Henry VI* is, no doubt, as good an aid to such studies as any other play in Shakespeare; yet who but a fool would put *Henry VI* into a school programme? The only interest that *Anne of Geierstein* possesses for serious students of Scott is the further revelation of his range of reading; and indeed it links itself to *Quentin Durward*, showing the struggle between Louis XI and Burgundy, looked at from the Swiss instead of from the French side.



*The Fair Maid of Perth* is in another category, for Scott is never barren of power when he chooses a Scottish subject. Indeed, I know no other book which suggests so well the life of those fortified towns, where, in the late feudal times, English-speaking communities with a strong municipal civilisation maintained themselves on the fringes of Gaelic territory—in part regarding al' outside their walls as hostile, yet in part linked to this wilder society by a network of ties through commerce and through friendly alliance—while at the same time feudal overlords, of Norman tradition, partly overawed both burgesses and Gaels, and partly were held in check by these other elements. It is a picture not of Perth alone, but, for instance, of Galway, illustrating the collision and contacts of these three elements.

There is further a special interest attaching to the study of the young Highlander who, after showing many instances of spirit, becomes a victim to panic in the decisive combat. Scott tried to show how a brave man may, on occasion, play a coward's part; and in doing so he had in mind, as we have seen, the defeat of his brother Daniel. It was, he said to Lockhart, an attempt at expiation for his own harsh refusal to attend that brother's funeral.

*The Chronicles of the Canongate* are much less generally known than the two later-written novels. Nobody should be advised to read *The Surgeon's Daughter*, though Dr. Gideon Grey is an affectionate study of Scott's neighbour and friend and attendant Dr. Clarkson, of Selkirk. But *The Highland Widow* seemed to Sir Walter when he wrote it to be in his "bestermost manner." He liked his own "big bow-wow style"—and Elspat MacTavish is a figure who, though in extreme old age, recalls Flora MacIvor or Rob Roy's wife. To my thinking, the merit of this tale (which, technically, is incoherent in structure) lies in the illumination of a little known page of history. How the broken Highland clans passed from the state of being lawless caterans, maintaining life by robbery, and justifying robbery of cattle—not without ground—on the plea that they had themselves been despoiled by forfeiture:

how, by what alchemy, these same wild people were transferred into willing and loyal subjects—must have often been asked by those who studied the parallel case of Gaelic Ireland. Scott gives the answer. The hunted robber, MacTavish Mhor, had a wolf's end, fighting to the last gasp, and dealing death as he died; his wife, who stood by him loading his piece, was spared by the slayer, yet turned her fierce soul to rearing a son that should take vengeance for his father; but she found the son lured from her by the call of the pipes, and the chance to take his place as a Highland warrior, in full Highland panoply. For—inspired by Chatham's genius—those who slew the fathers made this offer to their sons.

Elspat had her way, and the end is tragedy, naturally compassed; but there were not many Elspats, and in telling Elspat's story, Scott has told, by implication, how the Highlands were brought in. The Highland regiments did it.

*The Two Drovers* is that rare thing, a short story by Scott, and it brings vividly before our minds and visions a whole way of life that has now vanished—though old men on the Border can still remember to have driven cattle for sale so far as to London. Scott makes the conditions of that traffic converge to create a highly dramatic incident, no less than mortal quarrel between two friends, who, with base persons fomenting the dispute, are pushed into strife by irreconcilable views on the point of honour. I do not know any tragic tale that is more sober and moderate in its colouring, or more solidly based in its philosophy of racial differences.

The Two Drovers are a Highlander and a Yorkshireman, accustomed to keep each other company in the long march from markets on the Highland border to the south of England; and the Highlander, under evil omens, which he disregards, travels to their rendezvous at Falkirk. They traverse the Waste of Cumberland together, but, coming to enclosed country, must find means to accommodate their cattle; and Highland Robin leases from the local landlord a field which the landlord's bailiff had already

let to Harry Wakefield. There are high words on the spot; later, Robin goes down to the alehouse to "see if the lad Harry Wakefield is out of his humdudgeons yet." The bailiff eggs on the Yorkshireman, who challenges his friend to a bout; after that, they can shake hands. But Highlandmen are no fist-fighters, and Robin says, "We will be much better friendships with our banes hale than broken." When he is taunted with cowardice, he recalls how he had dragged the other from drowning in a swift stream. But the cry for a stand-up fight is still raised, and his answer is, "I have no skill to fight like a jack-anapes with hands and nails." And when he is knocked down, he flies for his own weapon, comes back with the dirk, and in the face of all plunges it into the English yeoman's breast. The narrative of the scene which follows is perfect, and perfect in its sobriety. One might object to the further conduct of the story; but the narrator is concerned to remove the English prejudice against the use of daggers, and puts a summing up into the mouth of a judge in court. Yet the last word is left with Robin:

"He met his fate with great firmness and acknowledged the justice of his sentence. But he repelled indignantly the observations of those who accused him of attacking an unarmed man. 'I give a life for the life I took,' he said, 'and what can I do more?'"

Over and above these two stories, *The Chronicles of the Canongate* contains in its framework matter of great and painful biographical interest. Since the original publication had come shortly after the public avowal of authorship, an introduction dealt with that matter. Sir Walter begins, after his fashion, with a story from which he draws a moral: the tale of an Italian actor who, having performed with great success vizarded, was persuaded by injudicious friends to dispense with the mask, and played Harlequin for the first time barefaced. The result was failure. "He had lost the audacity which a sense of incognito bestowed, and with it all the raillery which gave vivacity to his original acting."

There is a suggestion here, probably true, that the "Author of *Waverley*" felt himself free by anonymity from certain inhibitions that would have cramped his style: Walter Scott, Clerk of Session to the High Court, might not have devised jest and love-making and desperate adventure for public entertainment without some harperring thought of incongruity.—However, since the revelation was made perforce, both author and publisher thought it proper to print in this volume a full report of the festive proceedings when Lord Meadowbank fixed the charge on the Great Unknown, and Sir Walter Scott pleaded guilty.

Also, this Introduction makes general recognition of indebtedness to certain persons who had provided material for the novels; notably Mr. Joseph Train, supervisor of excise at Dumfries, who—particularly—recalled to Scott's mind the history of *Old Mortality*; and an unknown lady who sent an account of Helen Walker, on whose actual deed was founded the story of Jeanie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian*.

There is much more here for which faithful students will always be thankful. But for the moment it is more important to stress certain indications in the fictitious framework, which present to us the narrator, Mr. Chrystal Croftangry, his perfectly adorable Highland landlady in the Canongate, and his old friend, Mrs. Bethune Balliol, whose manners and speech preserved the traditions of the Court of Scotland and of the "high dames who anciently adorned with their presence the royal table of Scotland."

These characters (except Highland Janet) are presented by description, not by action, and have the less interest; yet the description lets us know how Scott's imagination occupied itself in the summer of 1826, when *Woodstock* was finished, and he chose to fill the intervals of work on *Napoleon* with some fiction.

Mr. Croftangry, in his youth, had run through a fine inheritance, and found himself obliged to take shelter in the Sanctuary of Holyrood. The precincts were wide—they included Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crag, so that the debtor had ample room to stretch his limbs. "Yet

'it is inexpressible," says Mr. Croftangry, "how I used to long for Sunday, which permitted me to extend my walk without limitation"; and in the six days of the week, though the royal park was spacious, the debtor found himself walking perpetually by the side of the gutter which made the line that no bailiff might cross.

"All Elysium seemed opening on the other side of the kennel, and I envied the little blackguards, who, stopping the current with their little dam-dikes of mud, had a right to stand on either side of the nasty puddle which best pleased them."

Thus, in 1825, the romancer, always presenting to himself some ideal scene, was busy contemplating in imagined detail this possibility, which, not eighteen months later, he actually prepared himself to undergo. If he never knew the tortures of restraint by experience, it is clear that a hundred times he underwent them in fancy.

A grimmer picture follows. Mr. Croftangry is released from his confinement by the benevolent exertions of a friendly lawyer, flies abroad, begins a new life, and after long years of labour hastens to the lawyer's house, with the offering for which his first guineas had been hoarded. He was shown into a 'sickroom.

"The easy-chair filled with cushions, the extended limbs swathed in flannel, the wide wrapping-gown and nightcap, showed illness; but the dimmed eye, once so replete with living fire, the blabber lip, whose dilation and compression used to give such character to his animated countenance—the stammering tongue, that once poured forth such floods of masculine eloquence, and had often swayed the opinion of the sages whom he addressed,—all these sad symptoms evinced that my friend was in the melancholy condition of those in whom the principle of animal life has unfortunately survived that of mental intelligence. He gazed a moment at me, but then seemed insensible of my presence, and went on—he, once the most courteous and well-bred!—to babble unintelligible but violent reproaches against his niece and servant, because he himself had dropped a teacup in attempting to place it on a table at his elbow.

"'You see how it is with him,' said the doctor, addressing me; 'I have heard our poor friend, in one of the most eloquent of his pleadings, give a description of this very disease, which he com-

pared to the tortures inflicted by Mezentius, when he chained the dead to the living. The soul, he said, is imprisoned in its dungeon of flesh, and though retaining its natural and unalienable properties, can no more exert them than the captive enclosed within a prison-house can act as a free agent. Alas! to see *him*, who could so well describe what this malady was in others, a prey himself to its infirmities!"

That was the ending which from 1826 onward Scott dreaded; and that was the ending which came. His description was drawn from memory of his father's deathbed. But "I have seen," says Lockhart, "the curtain rise and fall upon a like scene."

The end began in February 1830, when Scott was in his lodgings at Edinburgh; there was a seizure and a fall, and ten minutes of unconsciousness. After months of severe regimen, he was back at work; the *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* date from this time, with much else; but in all these Lockhart detects "a cloudiness of words and arrangement."

Happily, he was now able to resign his place as Clerk of Session, with retiring allowance; but this reduced his income from £1,300 to £800 a year. Government offered to grant a pension which would make up this amount, and Scott felt bound to let his creditors know of the proposition, but said that it would be painful to him to accept. They very honourably told him to consult his own feelings. "Few things," says Lockhart, "gave him more pleasure than this handsome communication."

Yet this was not all. On December 17th of this year, a second dividend was paid, reducing the total debt from £117,000 to £54,000. The creditors, renewing their previous vote of thanks, added a present to Sir Walter of all that Abbotsford contained; for all had been assigned to them. Once more the familiar plate, pictures and books were his own.

Well might he be thankful, and well might they pay thanks.

Two other matters of comfort should be noted in the same years. He was appointed Chairman of a Commission for

examining and editing the manuscript collections of the House of Stuart, which had come to George IV, on the death of the Cardinal York. The appointment was made by the king's wish; George IV also offered to confer on him the rank of Privy Councillor. This honour, however, was respectfully declined.

All the rest is unhappiness. Lockhart has traced with infinite skill and delicacy the slow progress of decay, and the leapings of the flame as the candle guttered out. Here I must only summarise.

Sir Walter was implored to limit his work to notes and prefaces for the collected edition. But he insisted on beginning a new novel—*Count Robert of Paris*—a tale of Constantinople in Crusading days. It went on, but feebly, and Ballantyne, always his accredited critic, did not conceal his disappointment; nor could Scott now well brook criticism. His doctors and friends implored him to take rest. But his answer to Lockhart was terribly explicit: "I am not sure that I am quite myself in all things; but I am sure that on one point there is no change. I mean, that I foresee distinctly that if I come to be idle, I shall go mad."

The sharpest strain on his failing faculties did not come through *Count Robert*. Great Britain was plunged into the political turmoil that led up to the Reform Bill, and Scott, though he had been willing to use his influence in support of the acceptance of Catholic emancipation, regarded with horror the effort to drive Wellington from power, which was successful in the election that followed on George IV's death. The old Tory thought himself bound to plunge into the fray; and he composed a new Epistle of Malachi Malagrowth, attacking violently the whole project of Parliamentary Reform.

Cadell and Ballantyne were afraid that the publication of so unpopular a pamphlet would be injurious to the chances of the collected edition, and to the whole prosperity of Scott's works. Cadell added that all the arguments had been used before and answered before, and that Sir Walter who seldom read newspapers, had fallen behind the course of opinion. The upshot was a sharp dispute,

and Scott flung his pamphlet into the fire. In Cadell's own opinion, "Sir Walter never recovered it." He felt wounded in his own house; and these men, who loved him and served him, went to their graves sad for having done what was their duty.

There is no question now but that Sir Walter was completely wrong in his political forecast; only, we must understand that at the beginning of 1831 he believed actual revolution to be approaching; and a letter to the younger Scott of Harden, member for the county, sets out his belief. In 1792, he had seen admiration for the French Revolution so rife "that only a few old-fashioned Jacobites ventured to hint a preference for the land they lived in." But then:

"Burke appeared, and all the gibberish about the superior legislation of the French dissolved like an enchanted castle when the destined knight blows his horn before it. The talents—the almost prophetic powers—of Burke are not needed on this occasion, for men can *now* argue from the past."

He would fain have seen young Harden, scion of his own old house, head another such rally.

Meanwhile he himself was eager to do his part, and so, on March 21st, 1831, he attended a meeting of the freeholders of Roxburghshire, held in Jedburgh, and spoke.

He was never an orator, and his voice was now so feeble and his utterance so hesitating that he could hardly be heard. But the populace of Jedburgh who had crowded into the Court-house, whether they heard or not, interrupted him with hissing.

He stopped his argument and opened on a new illustration. Again there was uproar; he stopped, proposed his resolution, and then flung his defiance at the mob. "I regard your gabble no more than the geese on the green." Then he sat down till the meeting was over, and, going out quietly, turned in the doorway and bowed. There were a few hisses; he bowed again, and said—not for their understanding—"Moriturus vos saluto."—Yet Jedburgh was to see him again.



• In the following month of April came another stroke, with succeeding weakness; but on May 1st, his diary notes;

“Go on with *Count Robert* half-a-dozen leaves per day. I am not much behind with my hand-work. The task of pumping my brains becomes inevitably harder when

‘Both chain pumps are choked below’;

and though this may not be the case literally, yet the apprehension is well-nigh as bad.—*May 3.* Sophia arrives—with all the children looking well and beautiful, except poor Johnnie, who looks pale. But it is no wonder, poor thing!—*May 4.* I have a letter from Lockhart, promising to be down by next Wednesday. I shall be glad to see and consult with Lockhart. My pronunciation is a good deal improved. My time glides away ill employed, but I am afraid of the palsy. My own circle in bodily matters is narrowing daily; not so in intellectual matters—but of that I am perhaps a worse judge. The plough is nearing the end of the furrow.”

On May 8th Ballantyne and Cadell wrote to say that *Count Robert*, though nearly printed off, simply would not do. He noted:

“I suspect their opinion will be found to coincide with that of the public; at least it is not very different from my own. The blow is a stunning one, I suppose, for I scarcely feel it. It is singular, but it comes with as little surprise as if I had a remedy ready; yet, God knows, I am at sea in the dark, and the vessel leaky, I think, into the bargain. I cannot conceive that I should have tied a knot with my tongue which my teeth cannot untie. We shall see—I have suffered terribly, that is the truth, rather in body than in mind, and I often wish I could lie down and sleep without waking. But I will fight it out if I can. It would argue too great an attachment of consequence to my literary labours to sink under critical clamour. Did I know how to begin, I would begin again this very day, although I knew I should sink at the end.”

Lockhart came then, and by May 12th had persuaded the old man to lay by his *Count Robert*. Things brightened a little, and there were rides through the plantations. But on the 18th was polling day at Jedburgh. In spite of Lockhart, the Sheriff ordered his carriage out and drove

over to the town full of "a disciplined rabble, chiefly weavers from Hawick." The carriage was pelted with stones as it went to the house of the Shortreeds, where they breakfasted; then Scott and Lockhart walked to the voting-place "saluted with groans and blasphemies all the way." Sir Walter had to be got out by a back door to the house of a friendly political opponent, and his carriage joined him there and they drove out—with one parting shower of stones at the Bridge. The diary notes:

"The day passed with much clamour and no mischief. Henry Scott was re-elected—for the last time, I suppose. *Troja fuit.* I left the borough in the midst of abuse, and the gentle hint of *Burk Sir Walter*. Much obliged to the brave lads of Jeddart."

The polling in Selkirk followed, and here, as Sheriff of the Forest, he was bound to preside. But Selkirk was too near Abbotsford for trouble to threaten. Even at Jedburgh, "three or four sturdy Darnickers" had got into the rumble beside the footman and shown by their attitude that an attack would be roughly met. In Selkirk, there would have been many more than three or four lads of such temper. One man ventured to hustle a Tory voter as he approached the booth, and Scott, who was just getting out of his carriage, saw, and arrested the rowdy with his own hand and had him packed away to jail.

But he did not forget the sound of "Burk Sir Walter." Those ugly syllables were on his lips in the babble of delirium when the last stage of all was reached.

The old good temper and sweet reasonableness were gone from him too, and he was estranged from James Ballantyne's lifelong fidelity. In July of this year, having put *Count Robert* aside, he started on one more romance, *Castle Dangerous*, a tale of the Douglasses on the Border in the days of Robert Bruce; and he refused to let Ballantyne see it. The quarrel had begun with the criticisms; but when Ballantyne's paper supported the Reform Bill, and Ballantyne himself began to attend some strange preaching on a Sunday, the separation became absolute.

• *Castle Dangerous* was quickly finished, and the *Robert of Paris* was also brought to an end; and the last address from Scott to his readers was penned to close *Castle Dangerous*. It announced the project which had been formed on his behalf.

All Scott's advisers desired that he should try the effect of a change of climate and a rest from labour; and a suggestion was made by Captain Basil Hall to Sir James Graham, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who adopted it. • On behalf of the Admiralty, and of the Sailor King, Sir Walter was told, that a frigate was at his disposal when he should choose to sail. Higher honour, or more kindly conceived, was never shown to a subject; and Scott set out for the last stage of his pilgrimage with the full assurance that he was treated as no common man.

Nor was this the only comfort. His failing grasp of reality had this alleviation that there grew up in his mind the gentle delusion that his day's work was really done, and that all the debt was not merely on the way to extinction, but actually paid off.

But there was other and worthier solace. The young Walter came to Abbotsford with news that he had got leave to join his father on the Mediterranean journey. He came with horses, and there was a morning when the young man gathered friends for a hunt with greyhounds on the hills above the Cauldshields Loch; and Sir Walter insisted that he also should get on Douce Dave, and be there to see. Lockhart tells how the old man on his sorry mount watched the young hussar on his superb black charger, and at last saw horse and rider take easily a high stone wall at which all other riders craned. "Look at him!" said he, "only look at him! Now, isn't he a fine fellow?"

"This was the last time, I believe," Lockhart adds, "that Sir Walter mounted on horseback."

One more thing was needed to round off this farewell to Tweedside, and it was not lacking. Kings' and ministers might give honour to the most popular of writers; but for completeness, tribute should come from his own peers. Only one man was living then in Britain who had the right to

praise Walter Scott as master praises master: and Wordsworth had never spoken of Scott's writings with reverence. But there had existed between the two men since their first meeting a solid friendship which grew with years, and, in spite of distance, into affection. In June 1830, Wordsworth wrote to say that he had by chance met Mr. Christian, deemster of the Isle of Man.

"He asked if I was acquainted with you. I replied that I had for thirty years, nearly, had that honour and spoke of you with the warmth that I am accustomed to feel upon such an occasion."

Then followed a transmission of Mr. Christian's complaint concerning the presentment of his ancestor in *Peveril*, which is of no consequence here. But the letter ended:

"My dear Scott, everlastingly yours,

"WM. WORDSWORTH."

William Wordsworth was formal and stiff in expression; but in the valediction he for once let himself go. Scott, though much less precise in utterance, nevertheless was no way profuse of endearments; yet his letter began: "Dearest Wordsworth."

It ended (when Mr. Christian had been disposed of) with a warm message: "And now, my dear Wordsworth, don't you remember something of a promise broken, and prepare to repair it. I hope you mean to visit Abbotsford, and bring as many of your family as you possibly can."

So it befell. Wordsworth, with his daughter, Dora, and his nephew (the future Bishop of St. Andrews) came to Abbotsford on September 21st. On the day when they left, Sir Walter gave to Dora Wordsworth an album with a few stanzas written in it, saying: "I should not have done anything of this kind but for your father's sake; they are probably the last verses I shall ever write."

The first stanza recalls the early days of their meeting, when the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* was only beginning to be written.

“ ‘Tis well the gifted eyes which saw  
 The first light sparks of fancy burn,  
 Should mark its latest flash with awe,  
 Low gleaming from its funeral urn.”

And in truth with no less than awe and reverence Wordsworth marked that decline. On September 22nd, as they returned from visiting Newark and other favourite haunts, they had to cross the Tweed directly opposite Abbotsford. Wordsworth has told the story:

“The wheels of our carriage grated upon the pebbles in the bed of the stream that there flows somewhat rapidly; a rich but sad light, of rather a purple than a golden hue, was spread over the Eildon Hills at that moment, and, thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream, I was not a little moved and expressed some of my feeling in the sonnet:

“ A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain,  
 Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light  
 Engendered, hangs o'er Eildon's triple height;  
 Spirits of power, assembled there, complain  
 For kindred power departing from their sight;  
 While Tweed, best pleased in chanting a blithe stram,  
 Saddens his voice again and yet again.  
 Lift up your hearts, ye mourners! for the might  
 Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;  
 Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue  
 Than sceptred King or laurelled Conqueror knows  
 Follow this wondrous potentate. Be true,  
 Ye winds of ocean and the Midland sea,  
 Wafting your charge to soft Parthenope!”

Since the world began, had ever prince, prelate or warrior been convoyed to his departure by so majestic and so moving a salute?

## CHAPTER XX

### THE END

1830-32

ON the day of Wordsworth's departure from Abbotsford, Scott with his daughter Anne and Lockhart set out by road for London, stopping a day at Rokeby. There was nearly a month to be spent in London, and doctors held a consultation. It was agreed that the brain showed beginnings of disease, yet there was hope of checking the decay. When the verdict was pronounced, Scott expressed thankfulness. "I neither regret nor fear the approach of death, if it is coming," he wrote in the *Journal*. "I would compound for a little pain instead of this heartless muddiness of mind."

But that composition was not vouchsafed to him.

On the 24th of October he, with his eldest son and both daughters, reached Portsmouth and joined the *Barham* frigate, which had been specially prepared for their reception. She did not sail till the 29th, and a fortnight later they were cruising in the Mediterranean, where, on November 20th, Sir Walter actually visited the volcanic island which then made an appearance, lasting only a few months. It was crumbling away when the party landed. On the 25th they were at Malta, and in quarantine. The poet was taken over places associated with traditions of the old Knights. "It will be hard if I cannot make something of this," he said. For he was still endeavouring to labour, and began two new novels: in the intervals of that

delusion which made him believe that all his debts were paid, there came back visions, only too lucid, of the need for exertion that his name might be redeemed.

From Malta the course was to Naples where his son Charles was attached to the Legation: and here also there was much sight-seeing. But among the antiquities of Cumæ, with the Lucrine Lake and Bajæ and Avernus all in sight, the old man's mind strayed home, and the verses he was heard reciting were:

"Up the craggy mountain, and down the mossy glen,  
We canna gang a-milking, for Charlie and his men."

So strong was the homing instinct that his companions ceased to urge further travel. The return was to be overland through the Tyrol and Germany, having one special purpose—to visit Goethe at Weimar. But in March came news of the poet's death, and Sir Walter's cry was: "At least he died at home. Let us to Abbotsford."

And in his letters home he quoted and requoted *Grata quies patriæ*, the fragment of a Latin verse with which he had ended, so many years before this, his memoir of John Leyden, buried on the distant shore of Batavia.

*Grata quies patriæ*: so much at least Fate did not deny him.—They posted north in April, paused in Rome some days—where a fellow countryman, Sir William Gell, found Scott in good talk, with the stores of his memory full at command. On May 11th they left Rome, and even when passing through Florence and Venice, haste to be home overpowered his desire to see: though still, when there were castles and dungeons to be explored, he must scramble painfully to whatever could be reached.

They passed through the Tyrol and took steamboat on the Rhine. On board the boat his last seizure took him, on June 9th. Paralysis accompanied the apoplexy. In London he lay for weeks at the St. James's Hotel in Jermyn Street, for the most part in a stupor; yet wakening from it at times enough to give a solemn blessing to his children.

On July 7th he was got upon the steamboat for Leith, and late on the 9th he was placed in his carriage and slung ashore with it.

He lay for a day in Edinburgh, and then, on July 11th, was driven to Tweedside—torpid and unconscious. But when the carriage began to descend the Gala Valley, he stirred and gazed about, and gradually names of recognition came to his lips. “Gala Water, surely,—Buckholm—Torwoodlee.”

“As we rounded the hill at Ladhope,” says Lockhart, “and the outline of the Eildons burst on him, he became greatly excited, and when turning himself on the couch his eye caught at length his own towers, at the distance of a mile, he sprang up with a cry of delight.”

There is a tablet now set by the roadside which marks the spot of that final and ecstatic recognition.

From here the direct course would have been across the river, but the river was in flood. Wordsworth had been right: Sir Walter had crossed the Abbot’s Ford for the last time in the other poet’s company. They must drive round by Melrose, passing opposite Sir Walter’s own woods and home, and Lockhart and the doctor and the attendant had much ado to hold the sick man in the carriage; he was for plunging across.

At last they were home, and he was lifted into the dining-room where his bed had been prepared. The dogs were all about him, but his first word was for a friend: “Ha! Willie Laidlaw! O man, how often have I thought of you!”

Once or twice he was able to be wheeled about his grounds in a chair, and then he insisted to be taken to his study and set at his desk. “Now give me my pen and leave me for a little to myself,” he said. His daughter, Sophia, put the pen into his hand, but his fingers could not close on it, and he sank back among the pillows that propped him, with silent tears rolling down his cheeks. After a little, “Friends,” he said, “don’t let me expose myself; get me to bed; that’s the only place.”—He never left his room again, though life remained for two months longer.



The end must be told in the words of his son-in-law who was summoned in that "lightning before death" of which Shakespeare had spoken.

"As I was dressing on the morning of Monday the 17th of September, Nicolson came into my room, and told me that his master had awoke in a state of composure and consciousness, and wished to see me immediately. I found him entirely himself, though in the last extreme of feebleness. His eye was clear and calm—every trace of the wild fire of delirium extinguished. 'Lockhart,' he said, 'I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man, be virtuous—be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here.'—He paused, and I said—'Shall I send for Sophia and Anne?'—'No,' said he, 'don't disturb them. Poor souls! I know they were up all night—God bless you all.'—With this he sunk into a very tranquil sleep, and, indeed, he scarcely afterwards gave any sign of consciousness, except for an instant on the arrival of his sons.—They, on learning that the scene was about to close, obtained a new leave of absence from their posts, both reached Abbotsford on the 19th. About half-past 1 p.m., on the 21st of September, Sir Walter breathed his last, in the presence of all his children. It was a beautiful day—so warm, that every window was wide open—and so perfectly still, that the sound of all others most delicious to his ear, the gentle ripple of the Tweed over its pebbles, was distinctly audible as we knelt around the bed, and his eldest son kissed and closed his eyes.

"No sculptor ever modelled a more majestic image of repose: Κεῖτο μέγας μεγαλωστί, λελασμένος ἵπποσυνάων."<sup>1</sup>

The order of his funeral was of a piece with his life. He was taken to the place of his own choice, to which he was bound by long hereditary descent, and where only by right of that descent he could be buried. It was the cemetery of a family, of a clan, and of a countryside. His own servants of the house and of the woods requested that none but they should carry the coffin to the hearse and from the hearse to the grave. All the pallbearers were his own kinsfolk, near and far, with Scott of Harden, the family chief, at the head of them.

All the countryside gathered, and many others came from far on that 26th of September. As the road leads to Bemer-

<sup>1</sup> Great, he lay in greatness, his border-ridings forgotten.

syde and Dryburgh, it climbs a steep hill from whose top is a view back over the windings of Tweed towards Melrose, beyond which lies Abbotsford; and here Sir Walter when he drove was accustomed to halt his horses and look back. It has never been forgotten that when the hearse with his remains reached this point, the horses checked there.

The precinct of Dryburgh Abbey is still to-day a burying ground, yet it is not crowded; for the right of sepulture is jealously guarded by the families who have such traditional ties with the abbey lands, as Scott inherited through his mother from the Haliburtons. For gentle and simple, for shepherd and noble, the right is maintained and guarded. Yet because Sir Walter Scott lies there, Dryburgh Abbey has been for this hundred years a place of pilgrimage, and for his sake it is kept like a cathedral close. It is a fit burying-place for that great tree-lover. Tweed runs past a hundred yards from the shaven lawn, but this space is filled with a noble fringe of beech and ash, whose great boughs sweep outwards over the sward which surrounds the ruined building. An avenue, tree-shadowed, leads from the road; and where the graveyard spreads wider, stand detached trees, a noble cedar, and several of the wych elms which are the special glory of that Border country.

The ruin is roofless, but the symmetry of its vast proportions remains, and the beautiful stonework of the windows is intact in the main surviving block. Yet two fragments of the building stand detached; and one of these, midway between the other outlier and the main building has been so cut off that, standing apart like a fantastically-shaped rock, it suggests almost the deliberate moulding of a huge casket. In that, under the groined roofing, is the tomb of Sir Walter. There, as the gravestone records, he was buried beside his wife; but another line adds that here also "at the feet of Sir Walter Scott" lies John Gibson Lockhart. This ultimate homage of the fierce creature whom men called The Scorpion might well be thought to have completed the fitness of those surroundings.

Yet time has brought to Sir Walter's grave an enhancement which no man that ever lived could have so valued as himself. When Turner came to Abbotsford, in 1830, searching for subjects to illustrate the Waverley Novels, Scott took the painter to Dryburgh as matter of course; but insisted also that whatever else was omitted Bemersyde Tower should have its celebration; and it was done. For of all Tweedside families none had more veneration from him than that of which Thomas the Rhymer prophesied:

"Betide, betide, whate'er betide,  
Haig shall be Haig in Bemersyde."

To-day Dryburgh is doubly a place of pilgrimage, and for thousands of visitors even Scott's grave will be of lesser interest than the oblong of turf beside it, enclosed by rails, in which is to be seen nothing but a small wooden cross, bearing the name: Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig.

If Sir Walter could have known that he and his would lie so close to the Scotsman who led British armies to victory in the greatest of Europe's wars, no man could measure his pride; and yet it would be hardly equal to his delight that this Tweedside gentleman should choose rather to lie in Dryburgh with the Haigs of Bemersyde than among the great captains in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's.

Nothing is more essential in the spirit of Scott's work than its use of local attachments to quicken a larger loyalty. Men will serve their country better, if they love their county or their parish with more intensity of affection. There was never for him any conflict between the claims of what Frenchmen have come to call *la petite patrie*, and those of the greater fatherland. But when work was ended, when a man could serve no more, it would assuredly have been his wish that each should belong to his own, and go to what was by inheritance his own peculiar place.

Loyalty in all its phases and applications was one of his great lessons. His inherited feeling taught him that a man may easily be in doubt where his loyalty should lie; and there is much discussion throughout the novels on the

casuistry of such doubters. But loyalty in the public sense, whatever shape it took, was to his mind as essential as manhood; it was a religion with him.

About religion in the theological sense, his characters hold little debate, except when such debating is held up to curiosity, contempt, or pity—according as the disputants are less or more likely to suffer for their doubts. He has written little explicitly of his own mind on this matter; but it is clear that he disliked the whole conception of independent speculation. One would probably not be far wrong in saying that Christians, to his mind, held the faith in which they were brought up as a trust, and had no more right to surrender it than a soldier has to leave passage for the enemy. His parting words to Lockhart are sufficiently explicit; and in his own household he not only maintained the practice of reading prayers on Sunday but let his guests know that their attendance was expected.

But there is one passage in the *Journal*, which has a speculative character. It was written on December 10th, 1825, just when ruin began to threaten him.

“There is nothing more awful than to attempt to cast a glance among the clouds and mists which hide the broken extremity of the celebrated bridge of Mirza. Yet, when every day brings us nigher that termination, one would almost think our views should become clearer. Alas! it is not so: there is a curtain to be withdrawn, a veil to be rent, before we shall see things as they really are. There are few, I trust, who disbelieve the existence of a God; nay, I doubt if at all times, and in all moods, any single individual ever adopted that hideous creed, though some have professed it. With the belief of a Deity, that of the immortality of the soul and of the state of future rewards and punishments is indissolubly linked. More we are not to know; but neither are we prohibited from all attempts, however vain, to pierce the solemn, sacred gloom. The expressions used in Scripture are doubtless metaphorical—for penal fires and heavenly melody are only applicable to beings endowed with corporeal senses; and, at least till the period of the resurrection, the spirits of men, whether entering into the perfection of the just, or committed to the regions of punishment, are not connected with bodies. Neither is it to be supposed that the glorified bodies which shall arise in the last day will be capable of the same gross indulgences with which ours are now solaced. That

‘the idea of Mahomet’s paradise is inconsistent with the purity of our heavenly religion will be readily granted; and see Mark xii. 25. Harmony is obviously chosen as the least corporeal of all gratifications of the sense, and as the type of love, unity, and a state of peace and perfect happiness. But they have a poor idea of the Deity, and the rewards which are destined for the just made perfect, who can only adopt the literal sense of an eternal concert—a never-ending birthday ode. I rather suppose this should be understood as some commission from the Highest, some duty to discharge with the applause of a satisfied conscience. That the Deity, who himself must be supposed to feel love and affection for the beings he has called into existence, should delegate a portion of those powers, I for one cannot conceive altogether so wrong a conjecture. We would then find reality in Milton’s sublime machinery of the guardian saints or genii of kingdoms. Nay, we would approach to the Catholic idea of the employment of saints, though without approaching the absurdity of saint-worship, which degrades their religion. There would be, we must suppose, in these employments, difficulties to overcome, and exertions to be made, for all which the celestial beings employed would have certain appropriate powers. I cannot help owning that a life of active benevolence is more consistent with my ideas than an eternity of music.”

In truth an ideal, if it were to attract Walter Scott, must be one of activity. He lived throughout his life, greatly in imagination—in scenes of fancied action. But shadow was never for him the equal of substance. Also his mind drew nourishment even for fancy from the life of action; and he left his mark in amenity and in usefulness where his passage lay. Nor was Abbotsford, with all its appurtenances, the sole result of the activity that was in a personal sense so unfortunate. Edinburgh is fully aware, and all Scotland is aware, of material benefits that flowed indirectly from his writings; but there is more to say. Largely because of his amazing gifts, it was possible for a great publisher to make the Scottish capital a notable centre of literary commerce, with excellent result for literature. This, also, is perhaps sufficiently known and admitted. But I have never seen allusion to the fact that Scott, by setting up Ballantyne in the printing trade, and by insisting that an Edinburgh press should issue the most reputed writings of his day,

must have done a great deal to make Edinburgh what it is— a centre of printing only second in importance to London. The best authorities do not speak highly of Ballantyne's work as a printer, yet even technically it raised the standard which then existed in Edinburgh; and by its prolific continuance it endowed the city with a large supply of trained workmen. Later, after Ballantyne's death it was left for a master in this craft, Robert Clark, to set the stamp of excellence on the Edinburgh work; and it is said, by those entitled to speak, that Clark's decision to start his enterprise in Edinburgh was based on the fact that it would be free from the disadvantages attaching to a skilled industry when it seeks to take root in a quarter not associated with such craft. The working printers in Edinburgh make a large and prosperous part of the town's artisan population; and it may be boldly asserted that they are under a deep obligation to the great man who found his ruin in a printing venture. His energy was beneficent, even when the result to himself was failure.

But what of his successes? He himself would not have claimed more than that he had made his native land better known, and better liked; that he had given pleasure, and that none of the pleasure could have done harm to any living creature. It is no small thing to have given healthy pleasure to millions; yet, to say no more than this would be a strange undervaluing. He must have quickened in thousands the desire for knowledge, and lit up for thousands dim spaces of the past. Yet even this will seem to his lovers a secondary achievement.

He gave to the world, and he still gives, the privilege of his company; the right to be enchanted with his tales, and at the same time to drink in his love of courage, of generosity, of clemency, and of fidelity; to be instructed by his immense and varied store of knowledge, to share his delight in the force and beauty of coloured speech; to partake in his wise and tolerant laughter. He will neither flout us nor lecture us, though we shall be left in no doubt upon what he holds honourable and what ignominious, and though we are more likely to learn from him how to make

allowance for others than excuses for ourselves. But at the end of our bout of companionship we shall probably be as little able to say exactly how, when, and in what part of our moral anatomy we have benefited, as to fix the precise advantage gained by our bodies in a day spent happily on one of his Border hills.

The more one reads him, the more one reads about him, the more enviable those seem who were his friends and companions. But since no man that ever wrote had more gift for imparting his own enjoyments, we who are fortunate enough to share some of them have no need to complain. The best of the Waverley Novels and the best of his lyrics seem as little affected by the passage of time as *Tam O'Shanter* or *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

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